

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 102 August/September 1991

(unwaged 30p) 50p

WINSTON SILCOTT another framed prisoner



FREE THE TOTTENHAM 3

As we go to press the news of another police-concocted confession has been exposed, this time to frame Winston Silcott for the murder of PC Blakelock. We give over our front page in support of the campaign to free Winston, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite – the Tottenham 3. They are all innocent.

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Reviving Keynes-clutching at straws

The level of public expenditure and taxation has been the cause of much noise and posturing between Labour and Tory politicians over the last few months. The more their future policies have tended to converge, the more vociferous are the accusations thrown. Labour says the Tories will deliberately slash public spending to open the door to further privatisation and tax cuts for their supporters. The Tories say that Labour is planning a massive rise in taxation to finance its huge public spending plans. In reality both parties have little room for manoeuvre as Britain's relative economic decline gathers pace and the recession deepens.

In a recent Editorial 'British capital - little room for manoeuvre' (FRFI 100 April/May 1991) we pointed out how in the mid-1970s the social democratic consensus between capital and the working class, which had been a dominant feature throughout the post-war boom, broke down. The rising consumption institutionalised in the Keynesian welfare state became a barrier to capital accumulation and was no longer feasible given Britain's relative economic decline.

Memories are, however, short especially where class interests are at stake. The petty bourgeois left still dream of reviving Keynesianism. This is not surprising.

The relative prosperity in the imperialist nations during the post-war boom gave rise to new relatively privileged sections of the working class - a new petty bourgeoisie. This layer of predominantly educated, salaried white collar workers grew with the expansion of the state and services sector and, in the more recent period, with the information technology revolution. The privileges and status of this layer rests on the continuing prosperity of imperialism.

The small forces of the British left draw their membership primarily from these new relatively privileged layers of the class and adapt to all its political prejudices and narrow eurocentric world view. This is the foundation of the left's apparently unbreakable bond with social democracy and its ambivalent stand in relation to British imperialism. At every stage as the material basis for sustaining a growing public sector was undermined the left demanded the process be reversed, putting forward programmes and strategies which sustained their link with the Labour Party and within a framework compatible with social democracy.

In the late 1970s we had the 'left alternative strategy' - a state-induced national programme of investment which flew in the face of the crisis of Keynesian state intervention in the economy. It was totally ignored. By the early 1980s we had those glorious havens of municipal socialism which, by the end of the decade, had shown they could not withstand the dual onslaught of Thatcher's attack on local government and Labour's headlong retreat into 'new realism'. The last ditch stand of municipal socialism is now being made in Liverpool and has even forced, albeit very reluctantly, *Militant* out into the open, finally exposing the widespread illusion that it is possible to subvert the Labour Party from within.

These political developments show that national Keynesianism has come to an end. British imperialism cannot sustain a traditional social democratic state. It was precisely Britain's

economic decline in the face of the challenge from a resurgent German and Japanese capitalism which threatened Britain's standing as an imperialist power and underlay the break down of the Keynesian welfare state.

Thatcher's economic programme, in particular, the sustained attack on public sector spending, was the inevitable ruling class response to this development, a futile attempt to halt the decline while sustaining Britain as a major imperialist power.

The social democratic left is, however, unable to face up to this reality. A recent article in *Marxism Today*, 'Europe's Tax Exiles' by Bob Rowthorn compares Britain unfavourably to Europe.

In 1969 Britain had the third highest ratio of government spending to GDP in the Western world, surpassed only by Holland and Sweden. Today the government accounts for a lower share of total spending in the UK than in any other country of the

European Community. And of all Western countries Britain is the only one where government expenditure in relation to GDP has actually fallen since 1969.

A similar picture arises with taxation and other kinds of government revenue. The share of government revenue in GDP is much the same in Britain as 20 years ago, whereas for most other countries there has been a substantial increase. The overall tax burden in Britain is well below that of most comparable European countries.

Rowthorn tells us that if tax rates were set at the German level in this country the government would have an extra £20bn to spend every year. With French rates it would be £40bn and with Dutch or Scandinavian rates £60-80bn extra. The mouth waters at such a bounty. More than enough to satisfy the requirements of even the most demanding petty bourgeoisie.

There is, however, a problem. Rowthorn is forced to admit that no political party in Britain is

going to take steps to raise taxes to European levels in order to create a European-style welfare state. The Tories, we are told, will not do this out of 'ideological predilections'; Labour, having accepted the broad outlines of Thatcher's tax policies, cannot do it. To advocate a change of policies at this stage would be political suicide.

In the mid-1970s Rowthorn was an advocate of the 'left alternative strategy'. At the time he argued that a left wing government could only put such a strategy into practice by breaking 'the power of the capitalist class in Britain'. It could not be done by passing appropriate laws in parliament 'but requires the mobilisation of ever wider strata of working people in ever more political struggles' (*Britain's Economic Crisis*, Spokesman Pamphlet No44 p25). Time has, however, moved on. The class struggle is no longer in fashion with Rowthorn and his kind. The Labour Party has moved rapidly to the right to get itself

elected and Bob Rowthorn has become a Cambridge professor. So, failing class struggle, how are we to create a European-style welfare state if Britain's relative economic decline has destroyed the material basis for it?

A European-style welfare state in Britain today would require a determined class struggle against capitalism. Rowthorn tries to sidestep this. Some 17 years on, all that remains of his social democracy is a kind of alchemy - adjustments made in his head are deemed to be possible.

Hence he tells us that from the mid-1980s onwards in Britain, incomes rose by 25 per cent and there was no need to reduce the overall tax burden. The £20bn saved on cutting public expenditure, and which provided most of the finance for cutting taxes at the expense of the less well paid workers, benefit claimants and the poor, was not necessary. Tax burdens are not the disincentive suggested by the Tories, and swallowed by Lab-

our, as the example of Japan with a top tax rate of 65 per cent shows. Neither is Britain too poor to afford a European-style welfare state as its GDP per head is higher than many countries in Europe.

Economic and political reality are simply ignored. Not only were the tax cuts politically necessary to ensure the re-election of successive Thatcher governments, but they were also designed to transfer wealth from the 'unproductive' state sector to private capital in order to boost profitability and restore Britain's competitive position. That this failed reveals the depth of the British crisis, something Rowthorn understood many years ago. 'The current crisis is not an isolated event, but simply a severe manifestation of the deep-rooted structural problems which have plagued the British economy and British society for the last century.' (*ibid* p6)

Britain's relative economic decline has accelerated over the last 12 years despite the benefit of more than £100bn from North Sea Oil and the growing income from Britain's investments abroad. These benefits have now been considerably reduced. Public spending is increasing and public sector borrowing of between £12-13bn in 1991/2 will be necessary not to create a European-style welfare state but because the recession has forced both a loss of income and extra spending on an unwilling government. Britain could indeed face a sterling crisis as interest rates fall and the £84bn foreign holdings of sterling are moved to less risky climes.

Rowthorn knows all this but like a drowning man clutching at straws chooses to see in it a possible solution to his problem. Faced with increasing demands on social expenditure as the recession deepens and unemployment grows, a future Labour, or even Tory government, says Rowthorn, faced with the stark choice of cutting public spending or increasing taxes might well choose to raise taxes. This would be seen as an emergency measure, but once they were raised then it is unlikely they would be ever brought down again under a Labour government. Hence the taboo of raising taxes could be broken and eventually it could become politically acceptable again to finance an improved welfare state through increased taxes.

Of such dreams are petty bourgeois illusions, hopes and aspirations made. Rowthorn has forgotten what he took for granted in 1974, that 'Labour's willingness to act as an administrator of British capitalism' (he should have said imperialism) makes it renege on its commitments, and Labour governments have eventually 'imposed a wage freeze, cut social services and created unemployment' when in power (*ibid* pp10-11). Kinnock's Labour Party hasn't got as far as even making the commitments.

Yesterday's self-proclaimed communist and his Labour left allies' programme essentially consists of two proposals: raise taxes and raise the moral climate for this to be done. They will not accept that it was the need to sustain Britain as a major imperialist power which forced British governments, Labour and Tory, to take the economic and political paths they did. For it would be tantamount to admitting that their own privileges, together with those of the petty bourgeois class they represent, can only be guaranteed by the existence of British imperialism. ■



Liverpool city centre viewed from the rubbish dump

Walton buries Labour Left

ROBERT CLOUGH AND LORNA REID

'2600 Votes for Socialism' - 'an excellent base to build a fight-back' - so trumpeted *Militant* and the SWP in the aftermath of the Walton by-election. Yet what did this represent in reality? In a city where one in six is out of work, where thousands of redundancies are threatened by the Labour-led City Council, where five out of six Broad Left councillors had been elected in the May local elections, very little indeed. Walton had long been the power-base for *Militant*, and there is no doubt that when they decided to field a candidate, they anticipated far greater support.

However, *Militant* had never been enthusiastic about standing in the first place. It was only pressure in the wider Broad

general election.

Within Liverpool itself, the impact of the cuts is being felt in many different ways - the refuse collection being privatised with the loss of 460 jobs, closure of children's homes, restrictions on all sorts of services such as libraries. A campaign of strike actions continues, but already the union leadership is attempting to split it in order to defeat it: last week, the chair of Liverpool NALGO called for GMB picket lines to be lifted just as over 2,000 of her members refused to cross them.

If Labour and its trade union allies are showing exactly what they are made of, the left are showing just how little they understand the process. Municipal socialism, the basis on which *Militant* built its support in the 1980s, is dead. The very notion that Labour 'belongs to the

working class' (*Militant*) is being exposed for the nonsense it is. The SWP changes its mind from one week to the next - one week it wants to vote Labour, the next Real Labour; their only certainty is that they need a constituency on which to build themselves, and *Militant* seems to have got there before them. Hence the plethora of Open Letters from the SWP on the one hand, and *Militant* refusals to accept SWP canvassers on the other. What both of them have in common is the desperate need for an alliance with the left-wing of Labour - in the unions, in CND, wherever.

The election revealed the extent to which Thatcher and Kinnock in their different ways have destroyed the left of the Labour Party. What remains are two rather mangy dogs squabbling over the carcass. ■

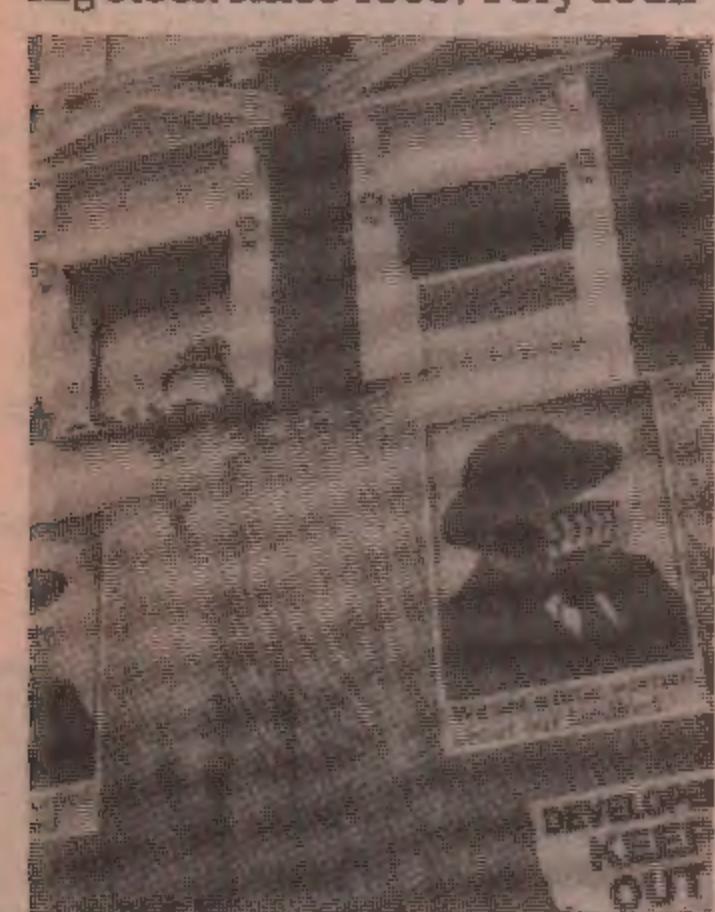
Scandals

LORNA REID

For Sale - Second homes in Westminster

Homelessness has reached highest levels ever but fewer houses are being built now than at any other time since the Second World War. Thirteen per cent less homes are being built than last year and over the last three years the number has fallen by 60 per cent.

In London, where homelessness is most acutely felt, local councils have sold off an average of one in five of their housing stock since 1980. Tory coun-



cils Bromley and Wandsworth have sold 50 and 40 per cent of their housing to private buyers.

Westminster council has hit another scandal over its housing policy. On top of selling housing stock to potential Tory voters in marginal wards, then offering its homeless people for sale to other local authorities, the council has called in the Fraud Squad to investigate 'irregularities' in its latest sell-off scheme.

A designated sales scheme has allowed people already with homes to buy council stock in exclusive areas of central Lon-

don. The scheme, which sells houses at a 30 per cent discount to people without homes but with jobs in Westminster, allows buyers to sub-let the property making profits of up to £30,000.

The housing stock in this latest scam is situated in Covent Garden, Victoria and Paddington - on the same streets as Westminster's homeless make their beds at night.

Scab Kinnock awards scab journalists

Make it juicy, make it stick, make it up - the three guiding principles for the majority of the British press and media.

Three *Daily Mirror* journalists were rewarded at the British Press Awards ceremony for their made-up smear story, 'Scargill and the Libyan Money'. Neil Kinnock shamelessly presented the 'Reporters of the Year' award the day before the allegations against Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield were thrown out of court.

'Evidence' for the story came mainly from Roger Windsor who was paid a total of £80,000 for his lies.

The NUM conference unanimously condemned Kinnock for presenting the award to the *Daily Mirror* liars.

No recession for the bosses

In the last 18 months, 186 company directors have been paid off by their firms with over £25m between them - an average payout of £135,079m. British Telecom awarded an outgoing director with £320,000 last year. Compare this to the £8,000 offered a BT catering worker with

13 years service facing redundancy this year.

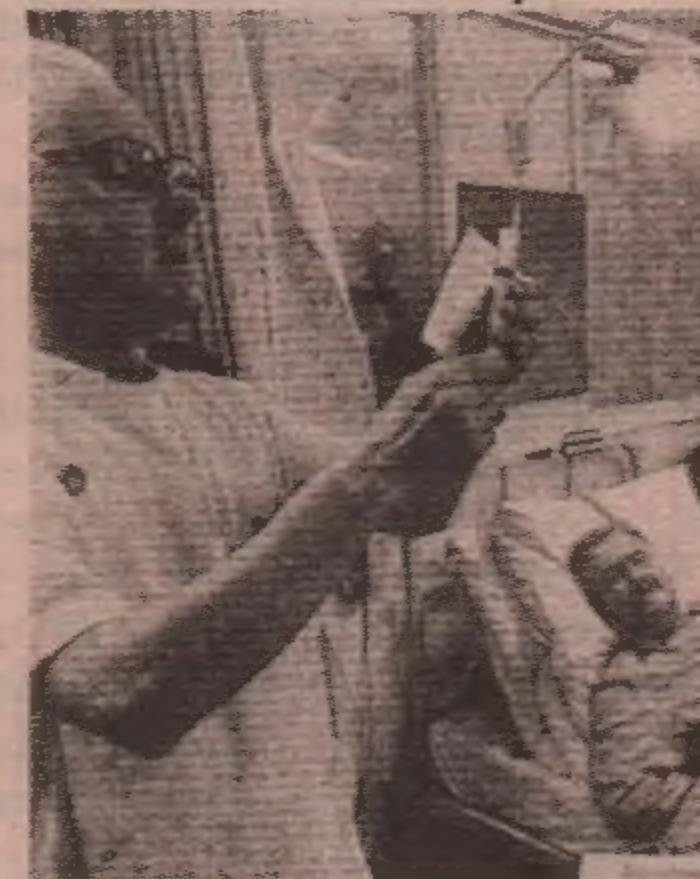
For the bosses who stay on, pay rises ranging from 43 per cent (BT) to a staggering 200 per cent (Powergen) have been handed out this year. This, at a time when 3,500 workers are dumped on the dole every day.

Workers who have still got jobs are working on average the longest hours for the worst pay in the whole of Europe. Almost half of British workers work a 46 hour or more week, one in ten work shifts of more than 13 hours a day. More than 30 per cent of businesses paid below the government's own minimum wage levels last year. Only two out of every 3,000 firms caught breaking the law on pay are prosecuted.

Silence on the wards

'A catalogue of shame and neglect which must be brought into the open...' is how Graham Pink described conditions for staff and acutely ill patients on geriatric wards at Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport. In letters to his local health authority and MPs between 1989 and 1990 he cited cases of patients dying because there was not a

Graham Pink at work in hospital



nurse available to attend to them.

For this, he was found guilty by Stockport Health Authority on trumped-up charges and has been suspended since August last year. He now faces the sack after losing his appeal against the judgment.

Two weeks before his appeal, the UK Central Council for Nursing ruled that Graham Pink had no case to answer. The council's code of conduct supports nurses who blow the whistle on poor standards of patient care.

The attack on Graham Pink comes at a time when Health Authority managers are making it clear they support the muzzling of staff to stop them publicising the conditions in hospitals.

Chef's special - genetically engineered lamb

On the food front, the government's scientific advisers have recommended that animal rejects from genetic engineering experiments be sold for human consumption.

The carcasses of sheep, goats and rabbits which have been unsuccessfully experimented on to make them secrete useful drugs in their milk have been described as 'perfectly normal' and safe to eat.

The Advisory Committee on Novel (sic) Foods and Processes is concerned that companies do not lose money on the experiments which have a very low success rate: only 0.1 per cent of animals experimented on are successfully modified - the rest have to be incinerated.

The Committee's chair, Derek Burke, justified the move by saying that the British public is quite adventurous in its attitude to trying out new food.

BCCI closure

TREVOR RAYNE

The world illegal narcotics trade pumps about \$300 billion through the capitalist banking system each year. Without this money a string of major banks would collapse and a financial crisis starting in the Third World would end in London and New York.

In 1985 Chase Manhattan, Manufacturers Hanover, the Chemical Bank, the Bank of Boston and the Bank of America were all fined for money laundering. This received just one small single report in the *New York Times*. The *Observer* (10.9.89) reported that the Medellin cocaine cartel laundered money through Lloyds, Midland and Barclays banks, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) and Channel Island brokerage firms. On 13 November 1989 the Bank of England sent out a letter to 550 institutes warning them of a forthcoming accounts inspection.

In February 1990 five BCCI officials were tried for money laundering. BCCI specialised in tax evasion, avoidance of exchange control and 'back-to-back' loans: a customer deposits drug money in one branch, the money is then switched as a loan to the customer through another branch and, hey presto, legal money! The officials were found guilty, but BCCI still appeared on a list of banks provided by the Bank of England which was treated as a guarantee by depositors.

On 5 July the Bank of England shut BCCI down. Deposits had been unrecorded and with no such records the money was looted. BCCI, founded on Afghan-Pakistan opium profits, was well connected: promoted by former Labour Prime Minister Callaghan and President Carter, with Conservative MP advisers and three quarters of its shares owned by Sheikh Zayed, ruler of Abu Dhabi. The Sheikh



BCCI employees protesting outside the Bank of England

had put \$1.66 billion of his own money into BCCI to keep it solvent.

In a business where greed and corruption are protected by secrecy and prestige BCCI was a bank like any other bank, but its interest rates were too competitive for a million depositors to refuse, regardless of nasty little rumours and investigations. Among those happy to ditch their scruples are British local authorities who have now lost up to £100 million of the public's money which they are threatening to recoup through higher Poll Taxes.

All that needs explaining is why the Bank of England acted at all. The reasons are simple: BCCI refused to act more discreetly even after a warning; the amounts of drug money swelling through the banking system are now so great that without tighter regulation instability is certain, and finally BCCI was controlled by Arabs not by City chaps and many of its customers are Asians. ■

In the Land of the Fast Buck

TREVOR RAYNE

Within three weeks of buying up 2.8 per cent of ICI's shares for £240 million on 14 May, Hanson plc had a potential profit of £21.5 million as ICI share prices rose. They rose because City institutions anticipated a multi-billion pound wave of credit flooding onto the Stock Market in pursuit of ICI shares. They rose because the Hanson bid signalled future job losses and cutbacks in investment in ICI's less profitable ventures. Above all, they rose because British capital is decaying, parasitic and profits are made increasingly not from the production of commodities but from the trading of assets and claims of credit.

Lord Hanson and his partner Lord White are personifications of capital; praising the single-minded devotion to profits to the level of a virtue: in the past 25 years ICI's shares have underperformed the London Stock Market by half, Hanson's have outperformed it by 3,000 per



Lords White and Hanson: the Cheshire cat grin personification of capitalism

cent! Some two-thirds of Hanson's income in the 1980s came from selling companies or bits of them: this is 'asset stripping'. The Imperial Tobacco Group cost Hanson £2.5 billion in 1986. By 1990 Hanson had raised £2.3 billion from selling off Courage, Golden Wonder etc. Former Imperial Group employees are still fighting in the courts to prevent Hanson from getting his hands on the pension fund surplus. In 1981 the directors of Berec, makers of Ever Ready batteries, recommended to shareholders acceptance of a

Hanson bid on the basis of a letter from Hanson stating that he 'does not intend to make major changes to the Berec Group'. Within a year Hanson had closed Berec operations in Hong Kong and the USA, sold subsidiaries in Nigeria and Norway, disposed of Berec's entire West European manufacturing and marketing network to the rival Duracell and announced major redundancies in British factories.

In 1990 23 per cent of Hanson's pre-tax profits were financial income (money made from

money), net interest earnings were £186 million. By using offshore subsidiaries in Panama, Bermuda and the Channel Islands vast flows of money can be switched from one section of the conglomerate to another yet need never show up in the accounts and hence need never be taxed; £9.5 billion was transferred in this way in 1989 but with combined profits over £1 billion almost no Corporation Tax was paid in Britain.

British-based subsidiaries of Hanson are 'sold' to off-shore subsidiaries. As their relative value increases they are sold on again, in this way avoiding Capital Gains Taxes. The trick is to transfer the asset off-shore quickly and ensure that its rise in value before the second sale is greater than the Capital Gains Tax levied on the initial sale. The value of the asset can be upped by 'sweating' it, cutting labour costs, cutting long term investments, or by financial and accounting manipulations.

Hanson balances combinations of exchange rates, interest rates and tax rates. He has borrowed in dollars at low interest

rates as the dollar depreciated through US subsidiaries and invested in the pound at high interest rates through British subsidiaries. The result of all these manoeuvres: profits and not a single battery, crane, ton of coal or jacuzzi, all part of the Hanson 520 plus subsidiary empire, produced! Magic! For this Lords Hanson and White are deemed financial wizards, in common parlance and more accurately sharks.

ICI, 580 subsidiaries in over 50 countries, would be the biggest Hanson purchase yet, literally dripping with assets ripe to flog. ICI's 1990 pre-tax profits were £977 million, 36 per cent down on 1989. Hanson is thought to have paid £11.94 per ICI share, giving ICI a share value of £8.4 billion. Broken up into bits it could be worth £14 billion. ICI's own team of three merchant banks raised the estimation to £16 billion. No doubt this only encourages more salivation in the Hanson camp: Hanson can probably borrow up to £17 billion for the bid.

Although a similar size to Hanson, ICI spends 17 times as much on research and development, 4.8 per cent of sales, £600 million, making ICI Britain's leading research and development spender. A third of this

goes into the high risk area of pharmaceuticals. Such expenditure is a deduction from immediate profit creating investments. Hanson spends about 0.5 per cent of sales on research and development. British firms as a whole spend about half per employee what US companies spend on research and development and a third of German firms. Nevertheless, while research and development expenditure in Britain between 1985 and 1988 was static shareholders' dividends rose 16 per cent and profits by 10 per cent. In these terms Hanson delivers and ICI does not.

The giant pension funds, insurance companies and banks that own the majority of both companies' shares could not give a fig about research and development and new products if they can get a dividend in some other way, in fact, they consider them a burden. Thus it is, that despite protests from ICI's celebrated board, from trade unionists and the few tatters of ethics still hanging to the media Hanson will be allowed to make his play and regardless of the outcome 25,000 workers are likely to be sacked, research and development projects cancelled and bits of ICI sold off for a fast buck. ■

Yeltsin romps home

TED TALBOT

The third week in June. At the start of the week Boris Yeltsin was elected President of the Russian Federation. Before the week was out he was in the United States. The *Washington Post* commented that President Yeltsin would enable the US imperialists to increase the 'leverage' on the Soviet regime. One of Yeltsin's main campaign messages was that he is influential in pressurising Gorbachev in the direction of a market economy.

Leverage is a key concept now with the imperialists; after 'winning' (and so easily!) the Eastern Bloc, they are now after the 'big one', the dismemberment of the USSR itself. During Yeltsin's visit Secretary of State James Baker pointedly referred to a future US relationship with the republics of the USSR.

In an article in the *Post* Brezhinski (President Carter's National security Adviser), explained the long term aims of leverage:

'In time, the existing Soviet Union may - and should - give way to a loose, democratic and non-militarist confederation of some of the existing republics, with Russia at its core, and to a looser yet association with those national republics that choose to secede altogether.'

In short, the total elimination of the Soviet Union as an international power is on the agenda.

IMPERIALISTS INCREASE THE PRESSURE

Militarily the US is holding out for the best possible deal for itself in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks. The major bone of contention is the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. The US-dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has issued a declaration on co-operation with Central and East European countries in a move designed to combat any Soviet attempt to re-establish itself there. However, the major imperialist weapon is economic.

As the Soviet Union becomes unable even to finance its debts, new commercial loans have trickled to a stop. The country is

now almost entirely reliant on Western governmental sources for its hard currency financing. Hence the concern of Gorbachev to attend the G7 (seven largest industrial nations) summit in order to beg the imperialists for more 'aid'. In the end he will be allowed to come to London but not to attend the summit. John Major has already warned Gorbachev that there will be 'no pot of gold' available to him. With such contempt do the imperialists now regard the leader of the once proud USSR.

IMPERIALISTS INVITED IN

Two of Gorbachev's leading economic advisers, Grigori Yavlinsky and Yevgeny Primakov, in a letter to the G7 leaders, admit:

'The economy is on the verge of hyperinflation. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line is growing. Serious problems with the country's paying capacity reflect its considerable dependence on imports. Social tensions have reached a dangerous level.'

The policies of the regime stand condemned out of the mouths of its own supporters. The Brezhnev era, characterised as 'the years of stagnation' by Gorbachev, which were characterised by a slow economic growth and social peace now appear halcyon by comparison. Whereas the Brezhnev regime at least had a basic commitment to the integrity of the Soviet Union, the answer of Yavlinsky and Primakov to economic crisis is to invite the imperialists to help restructure the Soviet economy:

'Once a coherent plan for reform in the USSR is prepared, the G7 should examine the prospects and prepare its parallel plan of action.'

Even the most anti-communist hawks can hardly have envisaged such a degree of capitulation from the leadership of the Soviet Union itself!

FACING THE FIGURES

It is in this situation that Yeltsin comes to power. His election tactics were simple and traditional: promise everyone something. Better wages, no taxes for students, higher pensions. Such a strategy has dangers: it can

raise expectations which Yeltsin simply could not fulfil. Immediately after his election Yeltsin acted quickly to dull such expectations: 'I must tell the Russians their life will not improve right now, probably not before the end of 1992.'

Nevertheless, his populist demagoguery had already worked and Yeltsin collected over 60% of votes cast. Hardline 'conservative' daily, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, alleged widespread electoral irregularities had occurred. However, when we consider that Yeltsin's nearest rival Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former Prime Minister and Communist Party-backed candidate, obtained only 16% of the vote with third place man Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Liberal Democratic Party, on 7%, then the scale of Yeltsin's victory becomes clear cut.

General Albert Makashov, who has been critical of the regime for 'selling out' Eastern Europe, did not even gain a majority of votes in his own military constituency or the Army Academy. But he did win an overwhelming 95% amongst the Construction Battalions, possibly reflecting the members' loyalty to the Soviet Union rather than the regime.

Lyudmila Alexandrova, of the TASS news agency, focuses attention on the contradictory elements of Yeltsin's appeal. Whereas the Brezhnev regime at least had a basic commitment to the integrity of the Soviet Union, the answer of Yavlinsky and Primakov to economic crisis is to invite the imperialists to help restructure the Soviet economy:

Yeltsin's results show a resounding win in the collective farms and many military districts. Significantly Yeltsin won all the major cities, bar Kemerovo which has a popular local leader, indicating widespread support for him among the industrial proletariat.

The Soviet working class is desperately short of an organisation which could reflect its independent political interests. This is a dangerous situation. As the crisis intensifies there is a definite social vacuum which Yeltsin's populist appeal fills today and which more reactionary forces could fill in future. ■

Blake escape trial



Pat Pottle and Michael Randle celebrate their victory outside the Old Bailey

CAROL BRICKLEY

'Remember your humanity, forget the rest'

That was how Pat Pottle, quoting Bertrand Russell, ended his summing up to the jury at the Old Bailey at the end of his trial, with Michael Randle, on charges of helping Soviet spy George Blake to escape from prison in 1966. The jury unanimously rejected Judge Alliott's instructions that they be found guilty. The not guilty verdict was a tribute both to the jury's common sense and contempt for a real abuse of legal process, and to the defendants' courage and commitment to the cause of peace.

Randle and Pottle are not communists or revolutionaries - they made their opposition to the Soviet system clear both in their political careers and at the trial. Nonetheless they decided, along with Irishman Sean Bourke who died in 1982, to help Blake, convicted of spying for the Soviet Union in 1961 and sentenced to 42 years imprisonment, to escape from Wormwood Scrubs.

The trio met Blake in prison - Bourke was a petty criminal, Randle and Pottle served sentences for their activities with the Committee of 100. They were impressed by Blake and outraged by the length of the sentence: 'Under every building is a sewer' said Pottle pointing to the Old Bailey cells. '42 years down that sewer means death.'

The escape was an amateurish affair helped only by the farcical state of security at the prison - the biggest surprise was its success. No plans were made for Blake once out of prison: he was lodged in a variety of houses, including one where the owner disclosed the affair to her psychotherapist. Blake was eventually smuggled out of the country by Randle and his family in a converted holiday camper-van and driven across Europe to Berlin. Bourke left the country using a home-made forged passport courtesy of Pottle. At the trial the defendants described themselves as a 'Lavender Hill Mob' - incompetent but lucky.

As the pair pointed out to the jury, this was the main reason they were not prosecuted in 1970 when Sean Bourke wrote a book describing the escape and implicating Randle and Pottle. MI5 were more than content to leave the public's perception of a KGB-masterminded plot un-

disturbed. It was only after renewed media interest in 1987 led to them being named, that the pair decided to write their own account of the escape. 111 Tory MPs demanded they be charged and the Freedom Association threatened to launch a private prosecution. They were charged.

They attempted to get the charges dropped through judicial review, arguing that the prosecution was an abuse of legal process on the grounds that a decision not to prosecute was made in 1970. Ironically, notorious magistrate Bartle at Bow Street magistrates court has recently thrown out criminal charges against police officers involved in the Wapping dispute and the Guildford 4 case, on grounds of abuse due to a delay of a few years. In Randle and Pottle's case there was a delay of at least 17 years. But then they are not police officers...

Blake also came in for special treatment in 1961, as Pottle made clear at the trial. Blake was a foreigner, half Jewish, and a committed communist after his work as a youth with the Dutch communist resistance during the Second World War: 'Not like dear old Kim [Philby], who was offered immunity, or dear old Anthony [Blunt], who was not only given immunity but allowed to continue his work as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures.'

Blake just wasn't the right class

so he was secretly tried and convicted.

But the prosecution's claim that the charges against Randle and Pottle 30 years later were very serious, crumbled when the defendants, who defended themselves, revealed that the prosecution had several times offered plea-bargaining. Describing the case against them as: 'a case of politics, a case of how governments lie, cheat and manipulate and then cover their tracks in a smokescreen of official secrecy', Randle and Pottle called on the jury to reject 'legal mumbo-jumbo' and recognise that rescuing Blake was justified and that their prosecution was politically motivated.

Ruffled by the defendants' blunt description of his life's work, Judge Alliott repeatedly ruled out the political justification: 'You must honour my ruling loyally. You must honour it.' The jury, like countless juries before them in trials like that of Clive Ponting, where the prosecution is plainly oppressive, decided instead to honour humanity. ■

POLICE FILE

'We care for London'

The Metropolitan Police Commissioner produced his annual report in June. Gone are the days of Sir Kenneth Newman's political machinations - Imbert is much more the technocrat. This year a graphic designer has got hold of the report and transformed it all in a tight-arsed typeface - lots of Met blue and bullets (typographical and otherwise). Gone are the days when police in the wrong uniform appeared on the cover. We loved the little photos - especially the one on the opening page of the 'Value for Money' section - someone in a vault somewhere really does care about police uniforms.

But on to the serious business. Police officers were responsible for 1,173 road accidents and 'suitable action was taken' - promotion? No wonder one senior officer at Cannon Row police station used to decorate his office with photographs of wrecked police cars - he was not stuck for choice.

Amid a wealth of figures, it is impossible to gather how much the Met paid out to settle civil actions out of court; or what percentage of ethnic minority applicants were appointed; and what is C Squad which produced 45 (only 45!) 'written assessments in relation to public order matters'.



Crime statistics reflect a national pattern of steep rises in property crime. Perhaps the real inheritance of Thatcher's decade can be found in some comparative arrest statistics: Violent Disorder: 1980 - 5; 1990 - 603; Causing an Affray: 1980 - 250; 1990 - 1605.

Some quaintness remains: the IRA is still the PIRA (Provisional IRA), and the April 1990 Poll Tax riot in Trafalgar Square is the 'anti-Community Charge riot'. Incidentally '542 police and a number of members of the public' were injured. Why so coy?

The most chill always comes from the statistics for deaths in custody. One wonders about M aged 45, Rochester Row station, who was 'Arrested for being drunk. Seen by FME (a doctor?) and declared fit to be detained. His condition later deteriorated. FME recalled and advised admission to hospital. Inquest verdict: Accidental death, and i) head injuries ii) bronchial pneumonia' - someone didn't care enough.

• This summer has seen the welcome departure of CC Anderton from Manchester police and Judge Pickles from Leeds. Pickles now features as a *Sun* columnist. I don't know what Anderton has become (the Angel Gabriel, perhaps) but Sir John Dellow (Deputy Met Commissioner) made a brief bid to fill the gap. Society has gone into 'moral reverse', we are all more disobedient and 'criminal enterprise rarely goes to the wall' (is this The Enterprise Initiative?). Anyway, Sir John has now thrown in the towel to take up directorships with National Car Parks and Group 4 Securities.

Unfinished business in Iraq

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The US and British governments are not yet finished with Iraq. Concerned that it could still emerge from the war as a significant regional military and political power, and therefore a potential challenge, they are continuing to pulverise the country. Economic, political and military measures continue to trap Iraq in conditions of abject poverty, hunger and disease. Suspecting that Iraq retains the capacity to develop a nuclear capability, Bush and Major targeted 100 alleged military sites for possible bombing operations. The prospect of a Third World country possessing nuclear weapons with which to defend its interests is intolerable. And more so in the case of Iraq with its vast oil reserves. Bush and Major therefore agreed, according to British officials, that:

Dr Eric Hoskins of the Gulf Peace Team commented:

'Iraq's civilians have been dying of starvation and disease in their thousands because of lack of basic food and medi-

cine. Never before in history has a government been prohibited from purchasing and importing food and medicines for its own people.'

An Oxfam/Save the Children Fund report noted:

'The unavailability of powdered milk spells nutritional disaster for children... the spread of diseases such as cholera and typhoid in the present conditions are inevitable.'

Even by the standards of their own Geneva Conventions, the British and US governments are guilty of war crimes. To highlight their barbarism both during and since the war, Ramsey Clark, a former US Attorney General, has helped establish an International Commission of Inquiry and War Crimes Tribunal. It will be a contribution to uncovering the scale of imperialist barbarism as it tried to crush and humiliate the Iraqi people. ■

POLL TAX

Labour gaols the poor



Supporters of pensioner Norman Laws demonstrate against his gaoling

LORNA REID

Over 30 people have been gaoled this year for Poll Tax non-payment. The majority of them live on social security payments. Half of them have been gaoled by Labour-controlled councils.

Labour MP Terry Fields, a supporter of Militant, was gaoled by Sefton Council, Merseyside, for 60 days. Neil Kinnock announced that the Labour leadership had disowned Terry Fields and declared, 'The law must take its course'. The right-wing Freedom Association tried to pay Terry Field's £427 Poll Tax debt through Kinnock in an attempt to deny further publicity against the Poll Tax. Kinnock advised it to pay the money to Sefton Council.

Pensioner Norman Laws (72) was gaoled for two months by South Tyneside Labour council in May. The prison authorities delayed Norman's access to essential eye medication to combat his glaucoma. After seven weeks in gaol Norman complained of sight problems but was not given prompt medical attention. By the time he was taken to Sunderland Eye Infirmary surgeons had to carry out an emergency operation on a detached retina to save Norman's sight. He was taken back to prison after just spending one night in hospital.

Harry Cunliffe (73) collapsed in gaol with a heart attack three weeks after being prosecuted by Hyndburn Labour council, Lancashire, and sentenced to 30 days on 31 May. Prisoners at Preston gaol held a 24 hour hunger strike when Harry first arrived. Harry's heart complaint was made known to the court before he was sentenced.

Ruby Haddow, the first woman to be gaoled for Poll Tax non-payment, was released on bail pending an appeal against Tory controlled Thanet council, Kent. Her husband, Jim, who is unemployed had just completed his 28 days sentence before Ruby was gaoled.

The second woman to be gaoled was Mrs Ray Lawton, an unemployed widow. She was sentenced to seven days imprisonment by Newcastle-Under-Lyme magistrates for a £95 Poll Tax debt.

Martin Blatchford and Steve Kershaw live on invalidity benefit. Both have been gaoled for Poll Tax non-payment. Martin was prosecuted by Dudley Labour council, West Midlands, and sentenced to 14 days imprisonment. Steve was gaoled by Bradford Labour council for 14 days.

Demonstrations have taken place outside prisons, police

stations and courts whenever Poll Tax non-payers have been gaoled yet the national press and media has not given a single column inch over to publicising these barbaric gaolings.

The gaolings are the state's revenge on the millions of non-payers who refused to back down. The Tories have declared, 'There is not and never will be any amnesty for non-payers'. It is one law for the rich and another for the poor. Nearly £2bn is owed in Poll Tax debt. The Tories wrote off £15bn worth of debts when they sold off gas, water and electricity. Every week the government and the City write off huge sums to their pals. These are just some of the debts the government is prepared to overlook:

- £500m owed by leisure and property group Brent Walker is to be written off by the banks.
- First National Finance Corporation has written off £12m owed by clients.
- Hill Samuel of the Trustees Savings Bank said 'yes' to writing off £200m owed by companies.
- Shipbuilders VESL plans to cancel its debt of £40m to the government.
- The treasury plans to write off £715m against the Scottish Magnox nuclear plant on top of the wiping out of £1,786m debts as part of the privatisation of Scottish electricity companies.

This total of £3253m would wipe out Poll Tax debts for over 10 million people.

The Tories are tops at looking after their own. Not to be outdone, 'fit to govern' Labour is leading the field in attacking the poor and the elderly who cannot afford to pay their Poll Tax.

The Poll Tax crisis is far from over. Over four million summonses have been issued for non-payment, 500 of these to commit non-payers to prison. The Audit Commission has admitted that at least £1.1bn unpaid Poll Tax will never be collected. A million people have disappeared from the electoral register in a bid to avoid registering for the Poll Tax.

In Scotland non-payment is growing. Strathclyde Regional Council has a £171m deficit in Poll Tax collection. Spending has been frozen. Labour controlled Lothian Regional Council has joined forces with Tory councillors to force through a devastating cuts package including the withdrawal of free travel for pensioners and disabled people.

Gaolings, bailiffs and cuts are just a sample of what the poor and dispossessed can expect of a future Labour government. Hand in hand with the Tories, Labour is making poverty a crime. ■

Gaolbreak: Britain humiliated

SARAH RICCA

If proof were needed that the Irish struggle still has the strength and resourcefulness to humiliate the British state, it was shouted from the rooftops in this month's break-out from Brixton prison. Nessan Quinlivan and Pearse McAuley made their escape as they were being escorted back to their cells after Mass by several prison officers. McAuley bent down and pulled out from his shoe a .25 pistol, fired three or four shots and asked for the keys - to what dumbstruck amazement from the screws we can only imagine. The keys got the two men into the main courtyard and a conveniently-placed, thoroughly terrified warden gave them a leg up over the outer wall. Running through prison officers' married quarters and out onto the road, they seized a prison officer's car,

but abandoned it when it was blocked by another. They ran out onto Brixton Hill and stopped a couple in a car, shot one in the leg, got both out, got themselves in and drove to Lambeth Town Hall. There they took a taxi to Baker Street tube station, paying the fare with £20 taken from the tourists. At this point they disappeared.

The sheer daring of this venture takes your breath away. It certainly took the breath away from the British ruling class and its servants - like a punch in the stomach. They rely upon those locks, bars and walls to keep at bay their enemies - amongst whom the Irish rank high. A security forces source said they were 'humiliated' by the escape: the Prison Officers Association said they were 'shattered'; Home Secretary Kenneth Baker was 'deeply disturbed'; only the Labour Party was jubilant, delighting in the chance to point out that it could be better trusted

to lock up Irish people than the Tories.

Just how it all happened is to be the subject of an inquiry by Chief Inspector of prisons, Justice Stephen Tumim. One thing is clear: it did not happen because security is too lax at Brixton. Brixton is a place where, according to ex-inmate Eric Allison, 'on a visit... you do not put your hand to your mouth to cough... The staff will assume that you are swallowing your "parcel" and they will grab you'.

Pearse McAuley and Nessan Quinlivan were Category A prisoners, charged with conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to cause explosions, charges which they deny. They had been held in Brixton since their arrest at Stonehenge last October. Their families, firmly behind them, have no faith in British justice. 'How many Irishmen have got a fair trial in England?', asked McAuley's brother. ■

Escape was the only way to avoid internment. Their re-trial and re-conviction by the media since the escape only serves to emphasise the point.

Meanwhile the locks, the bars and the walls are being made bigger and stronger. Plans are being considered to replace prison governors who, according to one minister, 'are too much like a bunch of social workers', with army officers. The two remaining Irish prisoners on remand in Brixton, Dessie Ellis and William Mackay, have been moved to non-remand prisons where some of their rights, for example to daily visits, have been removed.

What further measures are being planned for prisoners - and for Irish prisoners in particular - remains to be seen. That the regime will be tightened should, however, not be forgotten, as we savour the delight of Quinlivan and McAuley's defiant, courageous escape. ■

Maguires: Court of Appeal exacts revenge

SARAH RICCA

The British judiciary seemed to have had a bad time in its dealings with Ireland for a while: the Guildford Four... the Birmingham Six... and the May inquiry into the Guildford Four case.

This inquiry had accepted the wrongful conviction of the Maguire Seven, who were implicated in the forced statements of two of the Guildford Four. The convictions relied solely on scientific tests - never before or since solely relied upon - to show that a substance found on their hands and gloves was nitro-glycerine and that there could be no innocent explanation for it.

The May inquiry heard how at the trial crucial facts about these tests were covered up to secure convictions: these included the fact that second tests on the swabs from the hands and gloves were negative, and that some of the 'negative' swabs taken at random from the public were very close to those for nitro-glycerine. The Court of Appeal was asked to review the case.

And it did so, with all the graciousness of a playground bully exposed and forced to apologise to the victim who did the exposing. Its judgment was nothing short of staggering, as full of deceit and nonsense as the jury verdict on the same day in the Randle/Pottle case was full of common sense and justice.

All the facts were presented to the Court of the Appeal, along with the even more damning revelation, only recently unearthed, that a 1977 Home Office report found the swabs themselves may have been contaminated with nitro-glycerine. It was clear that the evidence which had secured the conviction was at best utterly unreliable and at worst rigged.

But the Court of Appeal managed to obscure all this by inventing a towel - a towel which had never appeared as evidence in any of the hearings, whose existence had never even been suggested by the prosecution at any stage. The Maguires' convictions cannot stand, said the judges, not because they were clearly never

contaminated, but because they were probably innocently contaminated by using a towel which someone else in the house used who had handled explosives.

In this judgment there is judicial outrage - but not at the wrongful imprisonment of seven innocent people, including a frail old man Giuseppe Conlon, sick with TB, whose death in prison was effectively murder. There is outrage only at the perceived attack upon the British courts responsible for all that suffering.

And there is nothing but hatred and contempt for Irish people, and revenge against them for having exposed British injustice at Birmingham and Guildford. ■

Gerard Harte free



Gerard Harte being led away from the court in Roermond after his acquittal

SÉAN Ó MAOLHOMNAIGH

On 12 July the Dutch courts cleared Gerard Harte of IRA membership. He left Holland to the jubilation of friends and relatives only to find himself behind bars once again when he landed at Dublin airport.

Gerard Harte is one of the four recently cleared of the killing of two Australian tourists. In April, he was convicted of the killings and sentenced to 18 years. In early July the Court of Appeal overturned the decision and also turned down a prose-

cution plea to convict the other three. The judge said they could not be found guilty of carrying out the aims of the IRA as they had already been cleared of murder.

Meanwhile, the other three - Donna Maguire, Paul Hughes and Sean Hick - face extradition to Germany.

Despite being held for 24 hours and the best attempts of the Dublin Gardai to trump-up charges against him, Gerard Harte emerged from his ordeal and walked free on 13 July, justice finally done. Well done, Gerard. ■

More British terror

PAM ROBINSON

Saturday 18 May Portadown The Dignan family have been 'visited' 10 times in the last three months and their house raided four times. They have been informed that their personal details are in the hands of loyalist death squad members. During the latest house raid the family, including two young boys, were forced to witness their mother being verbally and physically abused by the RUC.

Saturday 18 May Derry Keith McFadden received injuries including a black eye, and bruises and lost a front tooth when he was attacked by three members of two army foot patrols. After the incident the soldiers were seen hitting each other to create injuries in case of a possible court case.

Sunday 26 May Belfast RUC banned the Women Against Oppression group from holding a march from Divis Street to Belfast Town Hall. On two previous occasions they had marched without interference.

Monday 3 June Coagh, Co Tyrone The British army carried out a shoot-to-kill operation in which they murdered IRA Vol-

unteers Tony Doris, Lawrence McNally and Peter Ryan. They were ambushed by a hit squad which fired 200 bullets into them and their car.

Monday 27 - Friday 31 May Strabane The army and RUC carried out a blanket raiding operation, during which 1,500 homes, gardens and out-houses were raided. This was the third similar operation in the last seven months.

Friday 31 May Belfast High Court The families of Volunteers murdered in Gibraltar in March 1988 were prevented from continuing their case against the British Ministry of Defence.

Sunday 9 June South Armagh Cathal Caraher, 17, the younger brother of recent British army murder victim Fergal Caraher, was assaulted during an incident when a British army foot patrol arrived at the family home and subjected the family to verbal abuse and intimidation.

Saturday 22 June Dungannon, Co Tyrone Francie Hughes needed 12 stitches to head and face injuries after being attacked by a British army foot patrol whilst walking home. He was held for three hours at a local barracks and charged with assaulting a soldier. ■

The ANC's December 1990 Consultative Conference for the first time allowed discontent at the ANC leadership's handling of negotiations and internal democracy to be voiced. Some mistakes were acknowledged. It was agreed that no more secret talks with the regime would be held and to increase emphasis on mass action and internal democracy.

When the ANC's Conference opened in Durban on 2 July, the ANC was still paying the price for its leadership's illusions in de Klerk's integrity. In particular the violence in the townships has taken its toll. This, most of all, required a rapid and vigorous response from the ANC both to defend its supporters in the townships and to expose the regime's central role in sponsoring the killings.

A year ago, the Natal-based violence had already been imported to the townships around Johannesburg, and leading members like Mac Maharaj detained. But the ANC announced that negotiations would continue and signed the fateful Pretoria Minute, ending the armed struggle. In the lead up to the December conference the violence escalated, despite repeated ANC appeals for the regime to intervene.

After the December ANC conference important moves were made, initiated by the Pan African Congress of Azania (PAC), to build united action among the liberation movements. In April/May the formation of the Patriotic Front was announced, for the first time uniting anti-apartheid forces around demands for an elected Constituent Assembly and one person one vote. The ANC continued to talk to the regime in pursuance of its 'peace process'.

When the regime failed to honour its promise to the ANC to release all its political prisoners by the end of April this year, and in the face of renewed township violence, the ANC issued an ultimatum. It called for action to stop the violence and for the resignations of ministers Vlok and Malan, along with the release of the prisoners. The regime, unmoved, did nothing and the ANC was forced to suspend its official talks.

Throughout de Klerk has retained the initiative for reforms. While black people were being murdered in the townships, he announced further repeal of apartheid laws including the Land Acts and the Population Registration Acts. Throughout he has consolidated the regime's alliance with Inkatha's Chief Buthelezi, who is now touted around international capitals as representative of black opinion. The imperialists prefer a tribal chief to a liberation movement.

De Klerk has fulfilled international demands for an end to apartheid laws in only the most limited formal sense. Repeal of the Land Acts will not compensate black people for decades of forced removals and the bantustan system remains entrenched. For the mass of black people poverty and oppression are still the order of the day. Black unemployment is more than 40 per cent and millions remain homeless. Education is still organised on racial lines, with more than 90 per cent of white schools opting for continued segregation and privilege.

At least 900 political prisoners are

On 9 July the International Olympic Committee announced the re-admission of South Africa into Olympic sport after 30 years of isolation. Two days later, the International Cricket Council admitted the United Cricket Board of South Africa. The crowds, as they say, went wild.

From South Africa's Foreign Minister Pik Botha to ex-'Stop the Seventies' tour organiser Peter Hain (now a Labour MP), the consensus was that it was a vindication of a new, reformed South Africa. Sports commentators rushed in their copy on the merits of the Springboks, South African athletes and other white sports people: will they make it to the Tokyo athletics championships? What about rugby? 'For the first time in 30 years,' said the *Telegraph*, 'the Republic's destiny is firmly in their own non-racial hands.'

SOUTH AFRICA

PATRIOTIC FRONT

the next step to liberation

It was only a matter of time before President Bush, the International Olympics Committee and cricketing authorities lifted sanctions against the South African apartheid regime. Reluctant to impose them in the first place, they have been itching for months, if not years, to declare apartheid a thing of the past. The sanctions-lifting bonanza followed swiftly on the African National Congress's (ANC) first full conference since the unbanning of liberation movements in February last year. An acknowledged 'moderate' leadership was elected with a national committee more reflective of the membership but with a strong representation from the South African Communist Party (SACP). The ANC's commitment to the negotiations strategy was reaffirmed.

CAROL BRICKLEY assesses the latest steps in what the ANC calls a 'peace process'; DAVID AND NORMA KITSON report direct from the ANC conference in Natal; and CHRIS JAMES, ANDY HIGGINBOT-TOM and RICHARD ROQUES, who attended the British Anti-Apartheid Movement's 'Beyond Apartheid' Consultative Conference on 13 July, report on the AAM's plans for 'post-apartheid solidarity'.

still in gaol. After the April deadline they embarked on a brave hunger strike, facing barbaric treatment. It ended on instruction from Mandela. More than 150 political prisoners, mainly ANC supporters, in Bophuthatswana's gaols then embarked on their own hunger strike which continues as we go to press.

Above all there is no prospect for the majority of black people to escape their designated role as cheap labour to fuel a post-sanctions economic revival. De Klerk has continually made clear the regime's opposition to one person one vote, but this too may disappear if de Klerk can be sure that an alliance between the National Party and Inkatha will guarantee white minority rule. Assurance of this will require further undermining of support for the ANC. The evidence is now clear that the regime-Inkatha-inspired violence has been very successful in putting ANC support under pressure.

On 7 July *The Independent* on Sunday reported that its investigations into township violence have revealed



'Britain is the only country that is blocking, that is standing between us and our total liberation... We believe that the British people have done nothing to assist us in attaining our liberation'

Cyril Ramaphosa, now Secretary General ANC, speaking in July 1986

'a sophisticated and sinister conspiracy orchestrated from within the state aimed at destroying the ANC'. A former SADF Major, Nico Basson, alleges that the regime is funding Inkatha and training its members. The result of this has been 2000 murders since last July alone. The fourfold aim is to undermine the ANC's credibility; to promote Inkatha as the regime's ally; to promote ethnic divisions; and to convince the international community that black people are incapable of running the country.

A network of special squads operates in the townships for this purpose. Furthermore *The Independent* claims that the Army functions through the powerful State Security Council, by-passing Parliament, convinced that 'a fair political game will not secure white political control'. 25 per cent of the Defence Budget - R500m - goes into a secret 'Special defence account'. A 'terrifying contingency plan' exists to unleash an In-

katha/Special Forces army of thousands to prevent the ANC taking power in a democratic election. The only doubtful aspect of *The Independent*'s view is that they suggest that de Klerk is ignorant of the plans.

Countering this offensive will require not a 'peace process' but a liberation struggle in alliance with PAC, AZAPO, the entire trade union movement and other township organisations, not just those allied to the Congress Movement. This must replace reliance on de Klerk's empty promises. The formation of the Patriotic Front represents a positive step forward. Its first conference is due to take place in August.

But the task will not be easy. The end of the ANC's conference was soon eclipsed by the IOC's decision on 9 July to readmit South Africa to Olympic sport. On the same day President Bush lifted the sanctions provisions in the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. Bush's move is significant international recognition that apartheid has ended. Other countries will follow suit. Britain, of course, is well ahead of the pack, lifting its pitiful sanctions months ago. EC sanctions would have been lifted by now, but for the intransigence of socialist groups in the Danish parliament. De Klerk has been handed precisely the rescue package he wanted for the floundering economy and to seal his own hegemony over the 'reform' process. Shares and industrial indexes in Johannesburg rose to record levels.

The ANC condemned Bush's move as 'premature', calling on the 'international community' to listen to the democratic forces in order to 'push the peace process' forward. But terms like 'international community' have ceased to have meaning. Regardless of proclamations of friendship with the ANC, both the USA and Britain are pretending to consult 'black' opinion while pressing 'full steam ahead' in support of the regime. With friends like these...

AZAPO and the PAC were less equivocal in their response to sanctions lifting. AZAPO stated: 'None of the criteria set by international agencies have been fulfilled. Even the conditions of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act have not been met. Not all political prisoners have been released.' Bush's move is in fact tacit support for the bantustan system since no prisoners held in bantustans are designated as apartheid prisoners. De Klerk has made a mockery of the release process by freeing thousands of criminals including white police convicted of the criminal murder of black people, while black political prisoners are still held.

The PAC responded sharply to the lifting of sanctions: 'While we are still voiceless and still subject to rule by a racial minority, South Africa remains a racist state. Fundamental change has not occurred.'

The RCG maintains its opposition to the apartheid, racist regime and stands in support of the liberation struggle. There can be no 'peace process' while the regime is organising to destroy liberation organisations and their supporters, and is implacably opposed to self-determination for the majority. ■

Whither the ANC?

The five-day-long ANC National Conference - the first inside South Africa for three decades - ended on 6 July. 2300 delegates voted in a National Executive Committee composed of 41 men and nine women. A new five-man leadership team was elected composed of Mandela, Sisulu, Ramaphosa, Nkobi and Zuma. It is widely reported in the South African media that three quarters of the NEC are members of the SACP - self-styled Marxist Leninist but really Kautskyite, which has dumped the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of 'Workers Power' and multi-party democracy.

Due to delays caused by protracted voting procedures, discussion on the Land Question and Economic Policy was cut short. Lengthy reports were received from outgoing Secretary General Alfred Nzo, retiring President Oliver Tambo, and the new President Nelson Mandela. Trevor Huddleston from the British AAM

commenced proceedings with an equally lengthy prayer.

The suspension of the armed struggle continues, with MK being worried about being wound up. It was, however, resolved that it should be combat-ready, to help self defence units and to maintain arms caches, despite pressure from the Boers. Negotiations, expected to be protracted, will continue with the first step being the formation of a Patriotic Front.

The leadership wanted the phasing out of sanctions accepted so that the ANC can 'control the process'. But reality is ahead of them.

There was a call for mass action to support the liberation process, with the main thrust being a signature campaign launched last March. As most of the regions haven't reported on progress, it is not known how many signatures have been collected so far.

By the start of the Conference the ANC

claimed 700,000 members. However the PAC and AZAPO are growing too, each holding a conference at the end of last year. In the background looms the Inkatha Freedom Party with two million members.

Unless the violence escalates into a full-blown civil war when the matter will be settled by force of arms, with no guarantee that the forces of progress will win, the ANC's strategy is to progress to one person one vote with interim (perhaps prolonged) power-sharing to the extent of jobs for the boys and continual exploitation of the masses.

David and Norma Kitson
David and Norma now live in exile in Zimbabwe prevented yet from returning. David was nominated for the NEC by his comrades in Zimbabwe but 'unfortunately' the papers were received late. David Kitson has recently published an article, *Is the SACP really communist?* in *Work in Progress* 73.

Racist sport rejoins the club

But there is only the slightest pretence that the move will bring benefits to the black community. It is clear that teams will continue to be predominantly white, with token black representation. The lack of sporting and health facilities, segregated education, poor diet, poverty and homelessness for the majority of black people will continue to ensure that this is so. But the so-called 'multi-racial' United Cricket Board is not worried about that. Vice-President Mackerdhu stated: 'If it is all-white, it will still be a UCB team.'

What did the ANC think it would ach-

ieve by backing the initiative to the hilt, and sending along its sports organiser Steve Tshwete as a delegate to the ICC? Once it became clear that South Africa would be readmitted into Olympic sport, the ANC hoped that by allying itself with new 'non-racial' sporting bodies, it would be able to control the process of readmission. In fact, its views will be trampled as international sport rushes in to make the big bucks. There will be rich rewards for the privileged few, such as scab tour organiser Ali Bacher: the black majority will be lucky if their children are able to

kick a football around the rubbish and squalor of the shanty towns. The regime has been quick to claim the political high ground, and claim 'respectability' and 'acceptability'. Sanctions, it claims, were always a block on reform of apartheid.

The PAC has opposed the lifting of the sports boycott, denouncing it as premature: 'The purpose for which the sports boycott and trade sanctions were implemented have not been achieved. It's one thing to have non-racialism on paper, but the reality on the ground testifies otherwise.' SACOS, the non-aligned

sports boycott organisation, stands by its slogan of 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'. The West Indies abstained on the vote to readmit South Africa into world cricket. And, courageously, just two black British athletes, John Regis and Linford Christie, raised their voices to make the issue plain. Regis said: 'I don't believe that they have got it right... It's unbelievable that more than 20 years of apartheid can be turned round in a few days.' Christie added, 'I want proof that they have dropped the curtain because, as far as I can make out, it hasn't really happened.'

There is an attempt to drown these voices in the hysterical euphoria of the moment. But the message will be heard. It is the black majority which demands nothing less than liberation. ■

Cat Wiener

Beyond Belief

There was more than a hint of defensiveness from the platform of the AAM's 'Prospects for Post Apartheid Solidarity Conference' on 13 July. It was, after all, the week in which the ANC participated in the removal of the Olympic sports and cricket boycott, and President Bush announced the end of major US sanctions, yet apartheid, root and branch, is as alive as ever. The AAM is anxious not to be seen to be throwing in the towel. The RCG's delegates attended the conference to call for support for the Patriotic Front and an end to the AAM's sectarian tradition of only supporting one political trend in the liberation movement as a whole. Our delegates came back angry from 'a depressing' experience.

The AAM NEC was mandated by the November 1990 AGM to promote a 'wide debate within our ranks and beyond' to re-evaluate campaigning strategies in the period of 'transition' and 'post-apartheid'. In the end the debate was confined both to the NEC's contribution and politically to its like-minded followers.

The NEC produced 'Beyond Apartheid', a report dwelling more on the organisational arrangements for 'post-apartheid' than on what might be necessary to get there.

Their backs were covered of course: 'Certainly the changes which have so far taken place can in no sense be characterised as profound or irreversible' and 'such debate and study should complement and in no way undermine the immediate campaigning tasks' (which is exactly what it did). In this document the liberation struggle has become a 'peace process' even though the apartheid regime is certainly still at war.

So with a nod in the direction of 'immediate tasks' and uncomfortable realities, the AAM proceeded to dwell on whether the Post Apartheid Solidarity Organisation (PASO) would be democratic in structure ('open to abuse'), have charitable status (tax free), publish a magazine, or hold an annual event.

Of course the AAM's leaders are capable of rhetoric. Bob Hughes MP, who broke the sporting boycott long ago in an attempt to salvage the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games, reported back from the ANC conference and Mike Terry, Executive Secretary, spoke for the rest of the plenary. This 'open and wide debate' allowed no time for discussion in plenary session.

Richard Roques, RCG London delegate, challenged this at the beginning and in the event five minutes of 'open debate' was allowed.

The RCG also attempted to put a motion (see below) to the conference addressed to the question of changing strategy to meet the immediate priorities - in particular in support of the Patriotic Front and support for and consultation with all the liberation movements. No motions were allowed - this was definitely not the forum which would be allowed to make any decisions other than to the rubber-stamp plans for PASO.

On the issue of support for all liberation movements, Hughes offered a new argument to join the galaxy of excuses the AAM has for only supporting the ANC - it has been the fault of the PAC and BCM/AZAPO who had not approached them for solidarity.

The aims of the AAM leadership became clearer as the day progressed - rapidly declining support, and therefore funds, mean that redundancies at AAM HQ have already begun. In one workshop a delegate proclaimed 'We are talking about people's lives and jobs here!'. For one moment the RCG delegate thought he was talking about South Africa. But apparently he was talking about Mandela Street. Yes, the AAM has to cut its cloth according to its means, but for some at the conference this was to be the determining factor for the future.

The delegates, aware of some degree of shady dealing, did baulk from declaring 'the AAM is dead, Long Live PASO' quite as immediately as the Executive may have hoped. Mike Terry ended the day 'delighted' that

the AAM was going on with the fight. As for support for the Patriotic Front, well, as AA News editor, Alan Brookes, said: 'It's not formed yet, is it'. Our information is that the ANC and PAC agreed to its formation in April/May 1991 and that the ANC conference supported the move. But perhaps Brookes and the AAM leadership know better.

In 'Beyond Apartheid' the NC makes great claim to having made 'an important contribution towards the development of anti-racist activity in Britain by raising people's understanding of the need to fight racism in all its forms'. This is more than dubious and we are unaware of any anti-racist group in Britain which has taken its lead from the AAM. The liberation struggle of the black majority in South Africa has been an inspiration to anti-racists worldwide. People have given their lives. The AAM has to get used to the idea of losing a few jobs.

THE RCG MOTION
This conference welcomes the formation of the Patriotic Front and therefore instructs the National Committee of the AAM to immediately enter into consultations with all liberation organisations in South Africa/Azania who are fighting apartheid with a view to:

a) Giving solidarity to the demands of the Patriotic Front

b) Extending solidarity to all such organisations thereby allowing the view of all the liberation movements to be expressed.

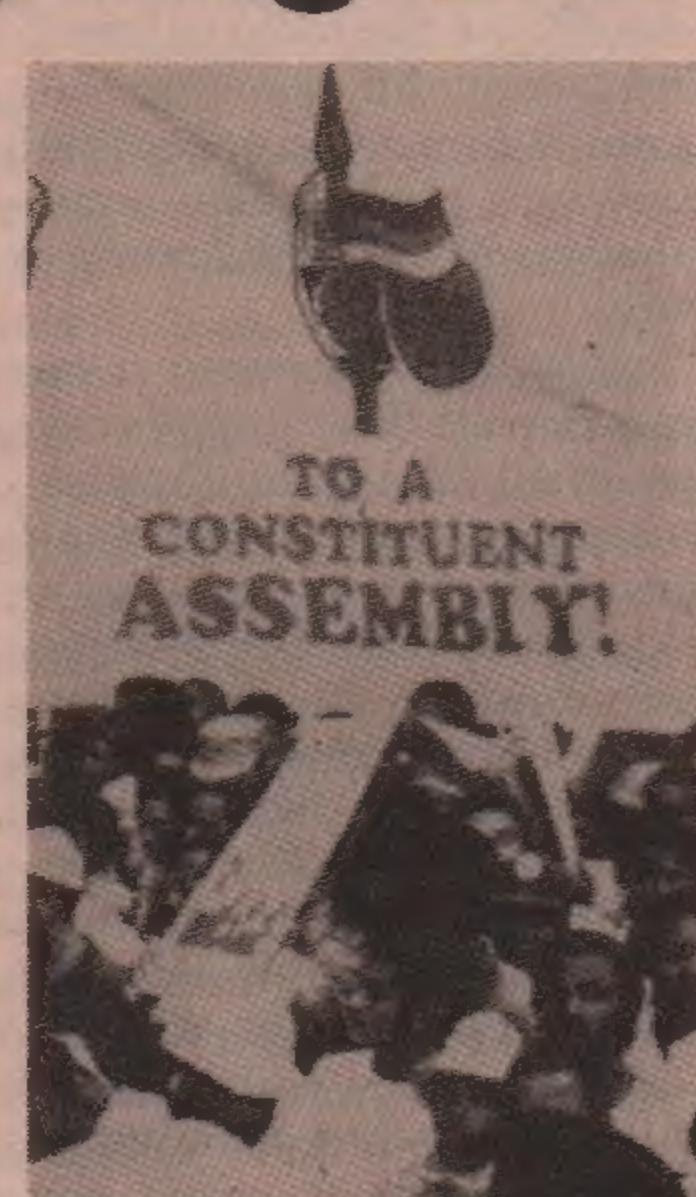
This conference further instructs the National Committee to call a conference within the next four months, open to all interested organisations and individuals to organise campaigning in solidarity with the Patriotic Front and its demands.

City AA and the RCG have also supported the AAM's weekly Wednesday evening pickets of the Embassy in solidarity with the hunger strikers. On those pickets, we have ensured that solidarity with all sections of the liberation movement and with the Patriotic Front is expressed. It is, however, a sad reflection on the state of the movement here that the AAM still attempts to deny the Revolutionary Communist Group the right to speak on these pickets.

City AA has pledged itself to continuing to campaign in solidarity with the remaining five Upington prisoners, and the Sharpeville Six (two of whom have been freed as we go to press).

There will be a rally outside the South African Embassy on 9 August, South African Women's Day, from 6-8pm. A City AA contingent is going to the Notting Hill Carnival, and there will be a rally on 12 September to commemorate Biko Day and mobilise support for the Patriotic Front. See you there!

Richard Roques



their regime. We have also been returning regularly to South African Airways in Oxford Circus to demand the release of political prisoners and the return of the exiles. No rights? No flights! On 29 June City AA singers performed at Gay Pride and received a standing ovation from the audience who joined in singing the African national anthem, Nkosi Sikelele.

Campaigning with City AA

Through June and July City AA has been stepping up its campaign against the vicious apartheid regime.

On 11 June City AA held a picket in the City of London where new South African ambassador Kent Durr was being wined and dined. The entire picket was arrested and charged with highway obstruction by apartheid's loyal servants, the British police. See you in court!

On 14 June activists from City AA and the RCG once again invaded the offices of SASOL in solidarity with striking workers in Azania/South Africa. In recent negotiations SASOL management expressed concern about City AA's 'visits' to the headquarters in London, and referred to the number of letters they had received as a result of the campaign of letter-writing. We'll be back!

The main focus of City AA's campaigning is still the weekend picket of the racist embassy in Trafalgar Square, with the demand for one person one vote for an elected constituent assembly and sanctions against the apar-

No Fortress Europe

MAXINE WILLIAMS

'We must not be wide open to all comers simply because Paris, Rome or London seem more attractive than Bombay or Algiers.' (John Major, Luxembourg 1991)

John Major wants a 'strong perimeter fence' to be built around affluent Europe in order to keep out the 'tens of millions' of potential migrants from south to north. As usual people from the Third World are the target of Fortress Europe measures. But Major also singled out migrants from Eastern Europe. The effect of the miracle market economy in Eastern Europe will be to turn them into the nomad labour of the New World Order.

Major called upon his fellow Europeans to guard against a tidal wave of illegal immigrants, drug pushers, criminals and terrorists. Having thus associated these disparate groups he went on to utter the usual absurdity

THAMESMEAD: racist harassment continues

For the family of 15-year-old Rolan Adams, murdered by the fascist BNP in February, harassment continues. The family has faced carloads of white skinheads parked up outside their house and telephone calls conveying joy at Rolan's death. BNP stickers, leaflets and posters continue to be seen throughout Thamesmead.

But the BNP are not the only racists operating in the area. Owen Benjamin, Rolan's uncle, has been stopped by the police no less than four times and had his car thoroughly searched. A friend of Rolan's, a 14-year-old black schoolgirl, was arrested at her home, allegedly for writing on buses.

This harassment has one clear purpose. Rather than accept Rolan's murder as just another statistic, his family and friends have organised to defend themselves. Already their defence campaign has forced the state to officially declare Rolan's murderer racist. The state fears black people organising to defend themselves. This is why the Adams family and their supporters are the targets of both the BNP and the police.

LONDON: Stop racist frame-ups!

On 1 May the BNP attacked a 500-strong black meeting in Euston. The meeting, due to be addressed by the Reverend Al Sharpton, was disrupted when the BNP threw in an incendiary device. The police, who were outside due to an earlier bomb threat, made no attempt to arrest the fleeing fascists. Instead they pounced on the black youth, arrested one, Sultan Mohammed, and charged him with assault and threatening behaviour.

The assault charge was thrown out of court, but the charge of threatening behaviour remains. No attempt has been made to arrest the fascists responsible for the attack.

Sultan Mohammed is appearing at Clerkenwell Magistrate's Court on Monday 29 July. There will be a picket of the court from 1pm onwards. Support Sultan Mohammed! Demand an end to racist frame-ups!

Chris James

that immigration controls must be tightened in order to safeguard racial harmony in Britain. By the same token he might argue that the mass deportation of all poor people in the north of England would be in the interests of the poor in the south east. The issue of immigration controls reveals the reality of imperialist relations - a minority of the world live well at the expense of billions in poverty. The fundamental injustice of that relation is mirrored in the sordid record of deportations, raids and virginity tests that have made up British immigration policy.

European immigration policy will be the same. Borders will be heavily policed, information on applicants will be centralised and shared.

Having cut most possible routes for immigration, the British government has now turned its attention to refugees. Home Secretary Baker announced measures to further limit the rights of asylum seekers. British embassy officials will refuse to give visas to refugees trying to

flee; the fine for airlines carrying passengers without valid documents will be increased. By these means they hope to prevent refugees ever arriving. Thus they can avoid the glare of publicity which surrounded, for example, their illegal deportation in June of a young Zairean. He was sent back despite a judge ordering the Home Office not to deport him and has since disappeared into the hell-hole of Mobutu's Zaire.

Refugees under threat of deportation will now be denied legal aid and will have to rely on the UK Immigrants Advisory Service, a government-sponsored body. They can be deported to face torture or death without even a personal appearance at their own hearings.

As poverty and hunger stalks the world, the rich countries are united in their message to the world's poor: you are there for us to rob, stay where you are and starve. If some of you do manage to scale our fence, you will not share our wealth, you will shovel our dirt. ■



GERMANY: Fertile ground for racism

Rising unemployment and poverty in the ex-GDR is providing fertile ground for fascist activity.

Following the murder of Mozambique Jorge Gomondai, there have been further fascist attacks, including one on the memorial service for Jorge. In the most serious incident, two 16-year-old Namibians were thrown from a fourth floor window in east Berlin. One is now fighting for his life.

However, organised resistance is growing, led by the 1.6 million-strong Turkish community. A German anti-fascist wrote to *RFI*:

'The young fascist movement... (have) lost the "battle for Berlin" against the Turkish community. Turkish youth gangs have occupied all the former fascist meeting places and are playing the major role in repressing the fascists who are still strong only in one part of Berlin... In Dresden 7000 people marched in protest at a racist murder. So things are beginning to look a bit better...'

BELGIUM: Fightback in Brussels

For two weeks in May the suburbs of Brussels and other Belgian cities were aflame as immigrants and their supporters fought back against years of police and state repression.

The immigrant community has been increasingly under police attack, particularly following the Gulf War, with harassment, arrests and stripsearches a daily reality for immigrant youth.

On 12 May, a full-scale police attack took place in Saint Antoine à Forest. The area was sur-

Nicki Jameson

FRANCE: A fascist by any other name

Scratch a social democrat and you find a racist. On 9 July French 'Socialist' Prime Minister Edith Cresson declared she would use mass expulsions and chartered airlines to deal with illegal immigrants. Like right-wing RPR leader Jacques Chirac (who accused immigrants of living off benefits and said 'If you add to that the noise and the smell, the French worker is going mad'), and centrist UDR spokesman Michel Poniatowski (who described fascist le Pen's policies as 'good sense'), Cresson is alarmed by the rise in popularity of the National Front in France. 76 per cent of the white population think there are too many immigrants in France. So the race is on to see who can be the most racist and carry off the local elections next year and the general election in 1993. So much for those who call for a vote for the Socialists to keep the fascists out! The black community, which has borne the brunt of the Socialist Party's racist policies for the last seven years, responding with riots and uprisings to police brutality, poverty and unemployment, must today dread the election of any of this racist lynch-mob.

Cat Wiener

Turkey declares war on Kurdistan

'We were witnesses that the Turkish state has officially declared war. Without any reason they keep shooting innocent people. Many people are dead or injured.' This was the message from Diyarbakir in North West Kurdistan (Turkey) from Popular Labour Party (HEP) MP Mahmut Alinak after the funeral of his comrade Vedat Aydin on 10 July. Vedat Aydin was chair of the Diyarbakir branch of HEP. He had been abducted by a unit of the Turkish state's Special Forces, tortured, his body riddled with bullets and dumped. The Kurdish people's response to this activity was massive and determined: 100,000 turned the burial into a proclamation that the Kurdish national liberation struggle will not be terrorised into submission.

The Turkish army responded with further terror. Commandos and tanks ringed Diyarbakir. Helicopters bombed coaches carrying mourners to the funeral. Counter-insurgency teams opened fire on the crowds who refused to disperse, chanted the illegal slogans of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and fought back with sticks and stones.

By 13 July reports indicated some 40 people killed, 208 injured and 1,000 missing. The Special Forces have been seen burying

corpses at night. Hundreds of people have been arrested, including Turkish and foreign journalists.

As news of the massacre reached Europe, Kurdish people protested in Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Britain. In London on 12 July 50 Kurds occupied the Turkish Embassy. An Embassy official reportedly pulled a gun and fired two shots. When the demonstrators withdrew they were charged with criminal damage. The Turkish Embassy claims that £100,000 worth of damage was done: this would have required pulling half the building down. The Turkish government will try to gain the support of British courts to impose severe sentences on the Kurds for having drawn the world's attention to the Diyarbakir massacre.

During the second week of July the US and British forces stationed in South East Kurdistan (northern Iraq) withdrew to form a permanent Rapid Reaction Force in southern Turkey - North West Kurdistan. Operation Poised Hammer includes a company of British marines. Ostensibly intended to warn Saddam Hussein off from an attack on the Kurds in Iraq, it has a function in reinforcing the positions of the bourgeois and feudal

Kurdish leadership of Talabani and Barzani. Its prime purpose now will be as a forward base in support of the Turkish state against the Kurdish national liberation struggle led by the PKK and National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK). Already its helicopters monitor PKK guerilla movements and British troops have intervened to retrieve Turkish soldiers wounded in attacks from the PKK.

Here we publish extracts from a speech made by HATIP DICLE, Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee in Diyarbakir to a large audience of mainly Kurdish and Turkish people in London on 29 June. It is a powerful indictment of the brutal racist Turkish regime which has confirmed its fascist character with the Diyarbakir massacre.

The British and US governments have been consistent backers of the Turkish state: supplying it, defending it, attempting to win for it international acceptance, just as they do for apartheid South Africa. Turkey must be isolated, boycotted and reduced to the status of international pariah for its racist oppression of the Kurds. Just as activists have sought to do with South Africa, so they must do with Turkey. Victory to Kurdistan!

Trevor Rayne

Before I explain the human rights violations that are occurring in Kurdistan I would like to pay my respects to the Kurdish people who have fallen in the struggle against tyranny and persecution and a struggle to defend their dignity and national rights. Those people were martyred in the national liberation struggle but they contributed to the fight for humanity against the dehumanising campaigns being waged against our people. Their struggle is recognised in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights where it is written that in order to defend your national rights, your basic human rights, all legitimate paths are valid.

The question of Kurdistan is one of the most pressing issues in the world today. All defenders of human rights and defenders of peace should realise that as long as the people are denied their independence and freedom there will be no lasting peace in the Middle East. Britain has the greatest responsibility for the division of my country; we do not blame the British people for this but we do expect international solidarity from democratic organisations and people in Britain.

FIFTY EIGHT YEARS OF EMERGENCY RULE

In nearly seventy years under the Turkish Republic the people of Northern Kurdistan have been under martial law and states of emergency for fifty eight of those seventy years.

Today in Turkey the existence of Kurdish people as a national entity is still not recognised. We have no rights for education in our mother tongue. Our children are not allowed to learn their mother tongue and have to learn a foreign language. Our people are face to face with an unprecedented assimilation campaign. We are not allowed to publish books in our own language. We have no right to produce any written works in our own language. Kurdish people are prevented from hearing their own tongue spoken on the radio or television. The penalty for speaking Kurdish at a political meeting or any kind of meeting in a public place according to the new Anti-Terror law starts at 15 years.

The Turkish government's campaign over the last three months saying it has lifted the ban on Kurdish, that it is bringing in democracy is all deception. Only fifteen days ago in Diyarbakir all the Kurdish cassettes that were on sale in the shops were confiscated in an operation. I have not heard of anything like this anywhere else in the world: Kurdish parents are not allowed to give their children the names they would wish to give, they cannot give Kurdish names. If they try to register their child at the local administrative office they are taken to court and prosecuted!

Our folk music is taken by Turkey, translated into Turkish and presented to the world as Turkish culture. They even win awards at international events.

This plunder is not only of our culture but also of our political rights. We are not allowed to establish a party with our own names 'Kurd' and 'Kurdistan'. This has been taken away from us. Our economic wealth

has also been plundered. In Northern Kurdistan all our economic wealth is being plundered. Ninety five per cent of the oil that comes within the borders of Turkey is in the Kurdistan area. All the phosphate, chrome and copper resources in Turkey are situated in Kurdistan. Eighty five per cent of the electricity in Turkey is generated from the hydroelectric plants on the dams of the rivers in Kurdistan.

Despite all this wealth that exists our people live in dire poverty. The average per capita income in Turkey is \$1,500, but according to our research the average per capita income in Northern Kurdistan is \$350. In Izmit, an industrial city in the west of Turkey, the average per capita income is \$3,500 but in Hakkari in the south eastern corner of Turkey, in Kurdistan, the average income is \$150 a year. In the west of Turkey the standard of living is similar to that of some European countries while the standard of living in Kurdistan is similar to that of Bangladesh. This indicates the level of plunder that has gone on over the last seventy years.

Every delegation that visits Diyarbakir asks the same question, 'What do the Kurds want?'. We say that we want the rights enshrined in the international treaties signed by all the countries of the world at the UN. Firstly, we want our national identity to be recognised. We want the bans and persecutions of our language and culture to be lifted. We want to be able to exercise our political rights, to act with our own name, in other words we want democracy in order to have the freedom to organise politically. We want the freedom to decide how our natural wealth is disposed of. We want to determine our own destiny. (Applause)

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAMPLED BY TURKISH MILITARY

To begin my description of the human rights situation in Northern Kurdistan I will go back to the 1980 military coup. Then the whole of Northern Kurdistan was turned into a torture chamber and the whole country was trampled under military boots.

All our intellectuals were thrown into prison. There was an horrendous level of torture in the prisons: some people set fire to themselves to defend their human dignity. The period of detention at that time was ninety days and in this period people were subjected to torture. Many people were forced to flee the country and become political refugees in Europe. I am not exaggerating when I say that there is not one house in Kurdistan that did not have a relative or someone they knew who was tortured, shot, killed or thrown into prison. Villagers were forced to gather in village squares and then tortured. Their houses were raided on the pretext of looking for weapons. Men were stripped-off in front of their wives and string was attached to their sexual organs and then they were led around the village squares. Relatives of political activists were arrested and tortured just for being relatives. The torture at that time was so intense as to be beyond comparison with anywhere else. But the repression and



PKK guerillas

Kurdish children are tortured and executed in Turkey's prison camps



to Sîrnak in protest at the barbarous act. The state replied with its troops and special forces who fired on the people killing five and leaving seven more with bullet wounds. These people who had seen their villages burned around their ears, driven from their homes and then had their only means of livelihood destroyed were fired at.

On 19 November in Europe there was a conference on the world reduction on arms. At Turkey's request thirty four countries agreed to exclude Turkey from new arms reduction proposals. We condemn those European countries that were signatories to an agreement that is turning Kurdistan into a veritable arsenal. Since 19 November the weapons no longer required in Europe are being transported to Kurdistan. Between Sîrnak and Uludere near the Iraqi border there is a military post every two or three miles.

The burning of villages is not the only method used to depopulate Kurdistan. There is a ban on Kurdish nomads taking their flocks of sheep to high pastures in the summer. This affects about one million people. The Turkish authorities' aim is to force the nomads to sell the sheep cheaply and leave the area. Another method is used: many Village Guards want to give up their weapons and when they present themselves to the authorities to resign they are told to load their belongings on a tractor and to leave Kurdistan and their homes. That is the only way their weapons will be accepted back.

SYSTEMATIC AND WIDESPREAD TORTURE

As you can read in Amnesty International reports and in the European Parliament there is an intensive campaign of torture in Kurdistan today. The period of detention upon arrest is

now thirty days. During the first two weeks many people suffer severe torture and in the second two weeks their bruising and marks are given time to heal so as not to be visible. Such is the intensity of the campaign of detentions that whereas once we were able to keep track of the number of people being detained now it is impossible. If there is a guerrilla attack near a village then all the villagers, men, women and children are detained and tortured. We can no longer keep track of all the incidents. The people do not need to be taken away to a military or police headquarters to be interrogated; local schools can be turned into torture chambers. People are given systematic torture: they are given electric shocks, hung up by their arms, made to walk on broken glass, hosed down with pressurised water, all kinds of torture are used.

MASSACRES TO DEPOPULATE KURDISTAN

Here are some recent examples of violations of human rights. I have a list covering the last year. If I detailed them all I would be here talking for another three hours so I will tell you just about some of the most striking examples. This list covers only about ten per cent of all the violations that occurred over the past year.

On 10 June near Sîrnak in the village called Gere, or its new Turkish name Gevrîmli, 27 women and children were massacred. There was a big campaign on Turkish television stating that the women and children had been massacred by the PKK; this was the state propaganda. We organised a delegation of lawyers and journalists to visit the village and talk to the people, but we were prevented from making the visit for 11 days. When we finally got into the village we discovered the following: the villagers who were killed were from families who had refused to become

Village Guards. The villagers said that those who had committed the massacre wore T-shirts and flak-jackets. There is a military base just fifteen minutes walk from the village. We are absolutely certain that those responsible for the massacre were the Turkish security forces - the Special Forces counter-insurgency teams. This massacre was timed to coincide with a European Security Conference held in Copenhagen. At the time Turkey was being pressurised by human rights organisations, so the Turkish authorities create this scenario - 'Look what the PKK has done. This is why we must have these new laws'.

The same thing happened in a village near Hakkari called Sete. Again nearly 30 people were killed and again the victims were from families that had refused to join the state militias. On 30 June 1990, in the Mardin province, a driver who refused to take troops to a military operation was taken to a military post and shot in the head. You may wonder what happened to the officer that committed this murder; he is still free despite the efforts of the family of the murdered man to have him brought to trial. He was not brought to justice, no enquiry took place into the murder. The officer said that the murdered man was a friend of his and that he was inspecting the officer's revolver when it went off and the man accidentally shot himself. With this explanation the authorities took the matter no further.

On 6 August 1990 in Hakkari Province it was reported on the news that seven PKK 'terrorists', as they call them, had been killed in a clash. We investigated this incident and discovered the seven were poor villagers who made a living by taking things from Turkey to Iraq to sell and then bringing things back. They carried their wares on their backs; it was very simple smuggling but they were taken to a military headquarters and shot out-of-hand. The bodies of these people were not returned to their families for burial. Instead, a ditch was dug and they were tipped in on top of each other, unwashed, in the clothes they had been wearing. Such is the condition of the Turkish state that they no longer respect even the dead.

Until three months ago the bodies of dead guerrillas were not returned to their families. Before 1986 the bodies of guerrillas in the Siirt area were tied to backs of vehicles, dragged around the streets and then thrown on the municipal dump. In 1988 there was a campaign to have the dump called the Butcher's River dug up, it is estimated there are a hundred bodies there, but the campaign was unsuccessful. The dump remains uninvestigated.

Turkey does not conform to the Geneva Convention: it uses napalm and gas and captured guerrillas are thrown from helicopters. A taxi driver disappeared on 11 June 1990. He had previously been arrested for having a Kurdish cassette in his car. Then he disappeared and his car with him. We know about people who disappear in Central America, but perhaps this is the first time someone has vanished together with their vehicle.

On 5 September 1990 a mental patient who had been released in Elazig only the day before was shot only 200 yards from his house and the security forces announced on the evening news that he was a 'terrorist'.

In recent times resistance to repression has grown among the religious priests. In September last year one was taken to a local military post and a different form of torture was used on him: as a strict Moslem he was forced to drink raki, an aniseed alcoholic drink. It was forced down his throat. This Imam had advised the people not to join the state militias.

In November 1990 another villager was arrested and detained for a week. After a week his body was returned to his family with a doctor's note saying that he had died of a heart-attack. The priest who washed his body said the back of his head had been caved in

and that blood was still seeping from it. He had been killed under torture in Mardin.

I have a long list of shepherds who have been shot while tending their flocks, of villagers shot and then the authorities claimed it to be an accident, or that they were terrorists.

In March this year before Newroz (the Kurdish New Year) there were incidents in Sîrnak where people were killed by the security forces.

Also the refugees who fled from Saddam told us that dozens had been killed at the border by the Turkish army in April.

Some of you may have seen the *Panorama* programme shown two weeks ago where there was a story about three girls who were out on the hills looking for an edible thistle called Kenger. They got lost and the local Village Guard informed the authorities that the girls had gone into the hills to join the guerrillas. Following this they were taken to a village military post, tortured, kept in cells and shown photographs of three people who it was claimed had encouraged the girls to join the guerrillas. The girls had no knowledge of this but they were forced to put their thumb-prints on a confession which incriminated these three people, two of whom had been imprisoned before as PKK suspects. One was a local official of the Popular Labour Party whom the state wanted to incriminate. He was arrested and is still in detention.

THE NEW ANTI-TERROR LAW

This April the Turkish government brought out the new Anti-Terror Law. It comes in the context of a mass mobilisation of the people in Kurdistan. There is now mass opposition to the Turkish government: the people close their shops for days, they go on hunger strike protests and thousands of people go to the funerals when guerrillas are killed. People are going to democratic associations and joining in the activities there. The main aim of the Anti-Terror Law is to suppress this democratic mass movement. The Turkish government announces to the world that it has lifted the ban on Kurdish, that it has removed the notorious articles 141, 142, and 163 - those laws that prevented freedom of thought and speech. They say they have separated such acts from terror offences, but in fact the same offences exist in the new Anti-Terror Laws. Indeed, under this new legislation for saying what I have said today I could be charged with a terror offence, I could be defined as a 'terrorist'.

No newspaper can print the truth of what is happening in Kurdistan for if they did they would be fined 500 million Lira (£70,000). Newspapers cannot print the names of the torturers; there are heavy fines for that. The Turkish state is so hypocritical: it was the first state to sign the Anti-Torture Convention, but with the new Anti-Terror Law it is protecting torturers; they will not be charged for their torture. Those people who kill our people in the villages even if they are charged their defence costs and solicitors will be paid for by the state.

The torturers must have been encouraged by this new law for only a month after it came into effect three brothers in Norsin a town near Bitlis were forced to eat dog excrement by the military. Despite all the efforts of the solicitor working for the three brothers he was unable to get an enquiry into the officer responsible. In fact, a major who had forced villagers to eat human excrement in Yesiurt near Cizre in 1988 was not punished, on the contrary he was promoted.

When I got on the plane to come here I opened a newspaper and read that on 25 June our Human Rights Association building in Diyarbakir had been bombed. The Turkish government hopes to frighten us into ending our services to the national liberation struggle but they will be mistaken. We will continue to expose their violations of human rights and send our reports to the world. (Applause) ■

Developments since the Gulf War are answering these questions unambiguously. On 29 May President Bush, with rhetorical flourish, proposed an arms limitation policy for the Middle East. But not for Israel. Soon after, US Secretary of Defence Cheney made no bones about this:

'To suggest that we might curtail military support for Israel because of these other matters would place in jeopardy a fundamental US foreign policy position...'

He then announced the delivery of 25 F15 jets to Israel in addition to \$120m to help Israel develop its own anti-missile missile. The US is also stockpiling \$100m worth of military equipment in Israel, available to the Israeli armed forces in case of emergencies! Cheney emphasised that the US would continue to 'maintain (Israel's) qualitative edge' in arms over the Arabs. Meanwhile Congress is preparing its annual \$5bn dollar donation to Israel and debating a request for an extra \$10bn to help 'cover costs' incurred during the Gulf War and help settle the hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews arriving in Israel.

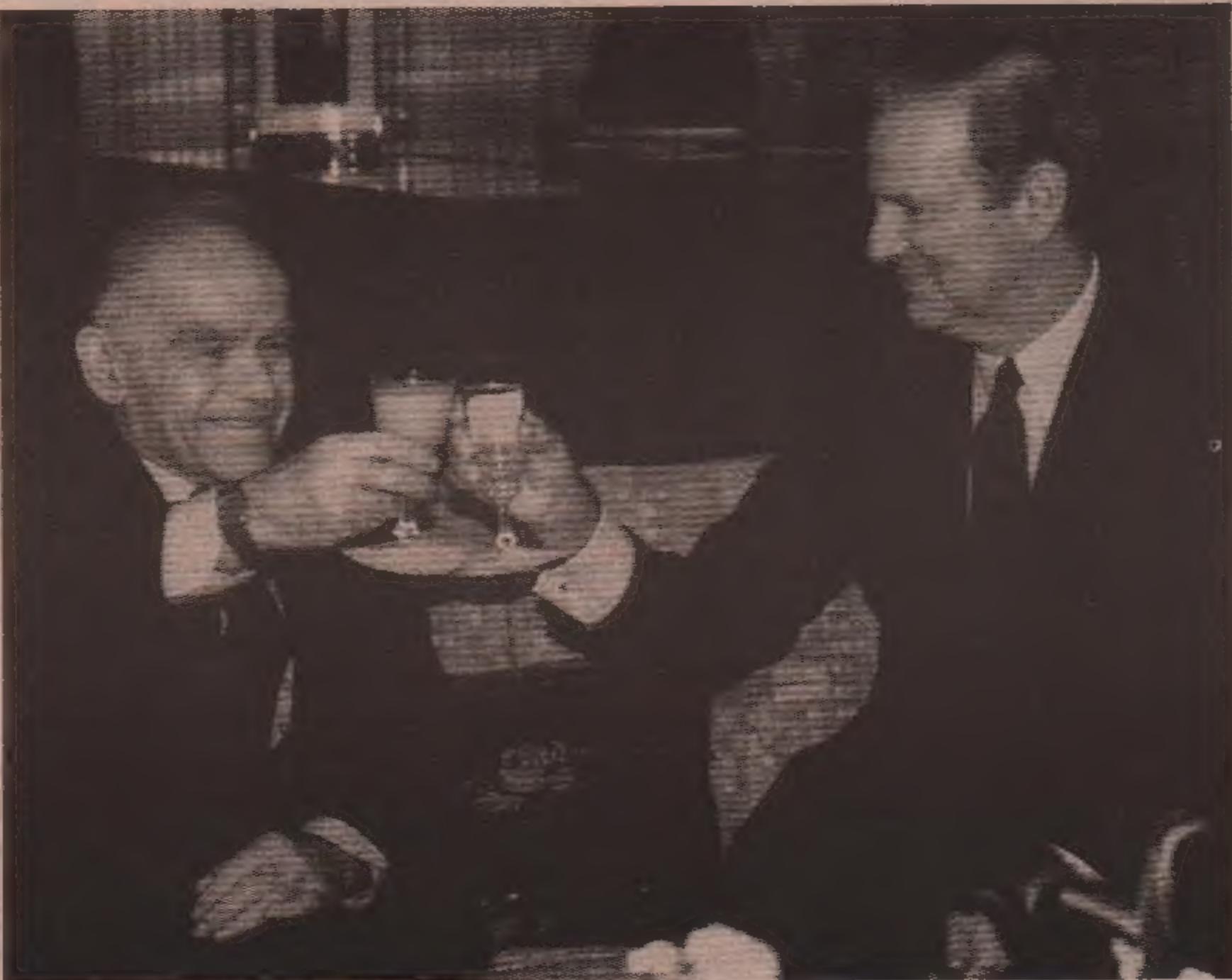
For how long the US will be economically able to thus finance Israel is open to question. But it intends, for as long as possible, to retain Zionism as a 'strategic ally'. In a region afflicted by growing and desperate poverty, Israel is the only stable, relatively cohesive and reliable pro-imperialist power. In contrast, the Arab ruling classes are inherently unstable, resting as they do on an increasingly impoverished population fired by hatred for imperialism. Furthermore, the US needs a firm alliance with Israel in its battle to retain dominance in the region against the challenge of European and Japanese imperialism.

Confident of current US support but also aware that it might not last indefinitely, the Israeli ruling class is moving rapidly to destroy the very foundations of the Palestinian nation. They aim to eliminate a unified cohesive Palestinian presence on the West Bank. A leaked government document outlining strategies to the year 2015 states that by 2005 Palestinian land in the West Bank will be reduced to 'a cluster of cities, interspersed with some villages'.

Emboldened by the imperialist vic-

Zionism's final solution

The defeat of pan-Arab nationalism, culminating in the imperialist victory in the Gulf War, and the collapse of the socialist bloc posed a fundamental question: does Zionism still remain a 'strategic necessity' for imperialism? Does it remain an indispensable imperialist outpost to secure control of the Middle East and its oil? Or can imperialism now force Israel to compromise with the Palestinians as it searches for alternative arrangements to dominate the area? EDDIE ABRAHAMS analyses the developments.



Shamir toasts Baker during the latter's recent visit

tory, Israel has, since the Gulf War, accelerated its land confiscation and colonisation. Tens of thousands of acres have been confiscated or earmarked for Zionist use. Zionists now control 50 per cent of all the land in Gaza. In the West Bank, 100,000 Jewish settlers have access to 65 per cent of the land, while 1m Palestinians only own 35 per cent.

The building of Zionist settlements on stolen land has also surged ahead. A UN NGO estimates that under Ariel Sharon's leadership, 20 per cent of Israel's Housing Ministry Budget - \$500m - has been allocated for settlements. This is as much as was spent on settlements in the past 10 years. The aim is to build 24,000 new

housing units and double the Zionist population of the West Bank in the next five years.

Every aspect of Palestinian existence is under assault. More people are today living in poverty than when the occupation began in 1967. Since the Gulf War, 80,000 out of 150,000 Palestinians who travelled every day to work in Israel have been sacked. Their income was critical to hundreds of thousands of families. This combined with the drop in remittances from the Gulf states means hunger and poverty will increase. Water, which is a critical resource in the area, is now monopolised by the Zionists who, constituting only 10 per cent of the population, consume



Israeli soldiers crack down

80 per cent of the West Bank's water.

Through such measures, the Zionists aim to ensure that if imperialism proves unwilling to continue its massive funding of Israel, it will have by then established itself across the whole of Palestine as a relatively independent entity after having vanquished the Palestinian resistance.

Parallel to these developments is the concerted effort to undermine and destroy the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Before the Gulf War, the US broke all contact with the PLO. Since then the Gulf states have withdrawn crucial financial backing. In July, under the direction of the Syrian regime, the Lebanese army moved south into the Sidon area to

disarm PLO forces who thus lost their last independent stronghold in the Middle East. And in Jordan King Hussein, by appointing the country's first Palestinian Prime Minister since 1972 - Taher Masri - expressed his ambition of taking the PLO's place in any negotiations on the future of the Palestinian people.

These developments combined with savage repression have one aim and one aim alone: the crushing of the Intifada. The Intifada was a spectre which haunted both Zionism and capitalism. In its first stages the Intifada was a popular revolt embracing the entire population led by the working class and the oppressed. It was they who sustained the uprising, fought the street battles, enforced strikes and dealt with collaborators. Even the bourgeois *Observer* recognised that:

'... most of the blood being spilt does not belong to the merchant class. It flows from the rough boys whose families never got out of the refugee camps. They are the real dispossessed.'

This mass movement produced its own forms of organisation: the popular committees which took over the organisation of all aspects of social, economic and political life; the commando units which took over the task of policing Palestinian areas. The Palestinian revolution witnessed the emergence of embryonic forms of dual power - on the one hand the Zionist state apparatus, on the other people's power, the power in the first instance of the working class and dispossessed.

Imperialism's new world order, its Gulf War and its support for Zionism is designed to prevent such a proletarian, revolutionary challenge from ever emerging again. Today, the Intifada stands more isolated than ever. Abandoned by the surrounding Arab regimes and subjected to years of bloody violence, the movement is discussing its future. Sooner or later it will emerge once again to challenge its enemies. For the will of the Palestinians and the 200 million Arabs to emancipate themselves from imperialist oppression, poverty and hunger will prove stronger than imperialism's repressive apparatus of which Zionism is the crucial component. ■

Fighting with stones and bottles

To all those... who lift up their pens as an effective weapon to confront injustice and suppression... to those who believe the purpose of the press is to convey the truth and not for commercial purposes... to all of you, we send you our revolutionary respects.

Our people in Diheshah refugee camp live under various different dangerous conditions which have reached their climax. These range from torture, oppression, deprivation, pressure, murder and suffocation. This has been going on for a long time, but during the last three months, the oppressive and inhuman Zionist activities have increased to the degree where the camp has been converted into a death camp (physically, psychologically and spiritually). The soldiers have been implementing a programme which had been planned by high authorities (Intelligence) who have been studying their plans by the inspiration of Hitler.

1. How can a terrible crime be rightly explained when a child of 6 years was pulled by a jeep van in front of his mother's 'and sisters' eyes while his mother was shouting and crying and while his head smashed into pieces in the daylight?

2. What does it mean when they impose a 'curfew of [5-10] days a month' while they implement their threat that every hundred stones is worth four days of curfew?

3. What does it mean when all houses are ransacked?

4. What does it mean when soldiers



demolish the furniture of houses, especially those of wanted ones? What does it mean to ask people to change the furniture's position like moving the fridge into the sitting room and the cupboard into the hall? What does it mean to break the fluorescent light thinking (as an excuse) that the stone thrown had hidden itself inside it?

5. What does it mean to destroy the people's cars and use them to block streets instead of the soil blockage?

6. What does it mean to hit the women and children and insult them and call them all 'the names under the sun'?

7. What does it mean to convert the camp into a military zone with more than 4 groups each of which consists of 6 soldiers in addition to the military camps in front of the camp and the new military camp on Anton mountain that was established in May 1991?

8. What does it mean to confiscate land? What does it mean to occupy houses and throw the furniture in the streets? Their answer is to keep the security, but as for us, the Popular Resistance Committee, we say, what security?

These are the fascists, Hitler's representatives, enjoying themselves to suppress people and then kill them, thirsty for blood, child killers - the majority of those killed are children.

We, the striking forces and the resistance committees will keep on throwing stones and bottles... it is our right to struggle and because soldiers only deserve stones and bottles. We also give reassurance that we will keep on struggling until the Intifada achieves its political goals and the establishment of an independent state.

The Popular Resistance Committee
State of Palestine, 26 June 1991

Letter from Palestine

Revolutionary greetings from the occupied land... Other than during the war when we were all under widespread curfews for more than a month, the repression has become worse. This is the 'iron fist' to ensure that the Palestinians accept Baker's regional peace conference plan. This is no more than a sell-out, a 'Camp David' in disguise which is even rejected by Shamir! This rejection is accompanied by increased settlement building and confiscation of land, increased repression and the so-called 'saving' of further Ethiopian Jews!

These Jews are urgently needed to fill the menial positions the Soviet Jewish immigrants refuse to occupy. The main repression is the closing off of 'Israel' proper (including all of Jerusalem - even Arab East Jerusalem) to Palestinians from the occupied territories - except by a special permit which costs a lot. It has to be obtained from the so-called 'Civil' administration of the occupied territories (ie the occupying authorities) and is only given to those with a 'clean slate' (ie no political convictions, those who have paid their taxes or have not 'crossed' the authorities in any way!).

This is part of a plan to restore the power of civil administration (which was lost during the Intifada), the town councils (puppets of the Israeli authorities) and the corrupt 'village leagues' (the latter can be paid to obtain a permit, in some cases).

The closing off of 'Israel' proper is

one more step in the 'judaisation' process of the Israeli state. As this causes considerable poverty and unemployment among Palestinians in the occupied territories, dependent as they are on Israeli employment, the authorities moved quickly to introduce token gestures to improve the economy of the occupied territories - a move condemned by the Palestinian left-wing on the grounds that it seeks to stifle protest, but obviously welcomed by Palestinian entrepreneurs!! There have also been moves by the authorities to give some local authority to different sectors of Palestinian society, for example by trying to get Palestinian teachers to be involved in the Israeli educational authority for the occupied territories. But obviously, there was a 'catch': these teachers also had to have 'clean' records!

Despite everything - increased US military and other aid for Israel; (revenge) repression of the Palestinian community in Kuwait; and deteriorating economic conditions (which are affecting all of us - except the bourgeoisie!), we are all determined and aware of liquidationist plans. Indeed, the leadership of the PLO right-wing are tempted into giving concessions to the US (as always!); the left-wing (especially the PFLP) refused to meet with Baker, and the majority of the people here reject the US plan. ■

Nadia

On 27 June Federal forces of the Yugoslav army and air force attacked the republic of Slovenia in the north of Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Croatia had seceded from Yugoslavia on 25 June. After a week or more of fighting between Slovenian territorial forces and the Yugoslav army a truce was agreed. Under strong pressure from the European Community both sides have agreed to a cooling-off period of three months. The beginning of civil war is a disaster for Yugoslavia, a disaster produced by the reactionary nationalist elites in the six republics who are in conflict.

Josip Tito, the founder of socialist Yugoslavia in 1945, died in 1980. During his lifetime he fought determinedly against all reactionary nationalism, whilst at the same time allowing self-determination and equality for all the peoples of Yugoslavia. Under a new constitution in 1974, Tito tried to establish the framework for the maintenance of Yugoslavia. This included the rotation of the office of president every year between the six republics and two autonomous provinces (see box). Tito also sought to strengthen the federal constitution and the Yugoslav Communist Party.

The present crisis has shattered these structures, in particular those whose aim was to limit Serbian power. One of the limitations of Serbian power was the formation of two autonomous provinces within Serbia: Kosovo with an Albanian majority and Vojvodina with a substantial Hungarian minority - they were de facto republics.



A younger generation of Serbian 'communists' considered that the 1974 constitution placed unnecessary limits on the rightful role of Serbia within Yugoslavia. In April 1987 these social chauvinists, led by Slobodan Milosevic, gained control of the Serbian League of Communists. Since that time Milosevic and his followers in Serbia have acted first as social chauvinists and never as communists, breaking federal party discipline on many occasions. In August 1988 after a series of mass demonstrations by Serbian nationalists in Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina, the federal party instructed the Serbian party to halt its nationalist campaign. Its failure to enforce this instruction signified the impotence and disintegration of the Federal Communist Party. In March 1989, the Serbian party became strong enough to revise the constitution and reincorporate Kosovo and Vojvodina.

The rise of petit-bourgeois bureau-

Nationalism destroys YUGOSLAVIA



A dead Yugoslav federal conscript soldier

The civil war which has erupted in Yugoslavia has brought to the fore the most reactionary and backward elements in each of its six republics. The working class movement, already paying a heavy price as capitalist restoration proceeds apace, is now faced with the prospect of bloody wars fought at the behest of aspiring bourgeois forces. DALE EVANS examines the crisis.

cratic nationalism produced at the same time a profound attack on working class living standards, which provoked over 1,000 strikes in Yugoslavia in 1989. The average inflation rate for the year was 1,252%, and at one point it peaked at 2,700%. Throughout the 1980s workers left the party in their thousands, judging their interests to be in conflict with party membership. In Serbia Milosevic attempted to buy off the working class with nationalist rhetoric, and the printing of money. Before the Serbian elections in 1990 the Serbian authorities made sure that wages and pensions were paid on time - by printing money (equivalent to \$1.6bn) in contravention of federal government decisions.

Since then Serbia has been in the grip of a liquidity crisis, with many workers receiving no wages.

Milosevic's attempts to buy social peace did not last long. In March Serbian youth and students took to the streets of Belgrade demanding the end of state control of the media and Milosevic's resignation. Milosevic called in the army - the first time ever against civilians - to quell the protests. In April three quarters of a million workers went on strike against falling living standards. Since then Serbian mothers have organised protests against their sons being sent to war. In these conditions Milosevic has survived by intensifying his nationalist campaign for Serbian domination of the whole country.

Parallel with rising Serbian nationalism, the other republics began to assert their own interests: in particular the northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia. They are by far

the two wealthiest republics. Slovenia, for example, has 8% of Yugoslavia's population but 20% of its GDP. Slovenes are twice as affluent as the average Yugoslav. At the root of it all are the bourgeois forces whose development was accelerated by the penetration of capital into Yugoslavia, fighting for economic power. The Slovene and Croat nationalists deeply resent having to subsidise poorer regions of Yugoslavia and have, since the 1980s, sought to gain full control of their own economies.



The reactionary character of all these nationalist leaders is clear. One of the first acts of the Slovenian nationalist leadership which won the 1990 elections was to declare an amnesty for those who had collaborated with the Nazis in the Second World War. The Croat movement has also 'forgiven' the 'Ustase', the Second World War fascist movement which perpetrated unparalleled atrocities, and has given their remnants the right to return from exile. The Serbs also have their modern 'Chetniks', descendants of collaborators with the Nazi occupation.

To subdue Slovene and Croat nationalism Milosevic raised the banner of Serbian irredentism. He used Serbian minorities in other republics as a base for Serbian domination of them. Serbs living in Croatia declared independence, claiming that the Croats intended to wipe them out. Serbs in the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina established Serbian controlled areas. This quest for a Greater Serbia, that is to bring all Serbs in Yugoslavia within one nation-state, is the main threat to stability and any possible solution in Yugoslavia.

Throughout the summer Yugoslavia's six presidents met to try to overcome the political impasse. The

meetings were a charade as Croats and Serbs engaged in armed provocations in parts of Croatia, and the federal army prevented the disarming of the Chetniks.

Milosevic's participation in the talks was merely deception while he attempted to undermine federal institutions. In an attempt to engineer a military coup, the Serbian nationalists ensured that the presidential council failed to elect a federal president. The army - the only power capable of realising Milosevic's goal of a Greater Serbia - refused to respond. It cannot play out this role. While 70% of its officers are Serbs, the ordinary conscripts come from all over Yugoslavia. If it were used to advance Serb ambitions it could disintegrate. Indeed in the recent fighting in Slovenia over 2,000 conscripts surrendered to Slovene territorial forces, and many units refused to fight with conviction.



The collapse of the socialist bloc, rather than heralding an epoch of democracy, peace and self-determination, threatens to unleash vicious nationalist conflicts in which the price will be paid by the working class. In this process Serbian chauvinism and its irredentist ambitions are the dominant destabilising factors. They threaten the territorial integrity of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, and are a threat to Macedonia, that would be strongly resisted. This threat has strengthened the Macedonian nationalists, who form the largest party in the republic and who now seek independence.

The break-up of Yugoslavia will also have considerable international repercussions. It could encourage other reactionary nationalist forces in the region to fight for unification with surrounding countries as their only means of escaping Serbian rule for example the Albanians of Kosovo, Hungarians in Vojvodina, Bulgarians and Greeks in Macedonia. Further many states could lay claim to the annexation of areas where their own nationalities live in other countries.

At the moment the imperialists regard such developments as extremely dangerous. Their aim is to retain Eastern Europe's current borders drawn up in the 1918-1922 period. Anything else may, they judge, upset their plans for long term domination of the region. Nationalist risings could only upset their plans for investment and the extraction of profits. This explains why the EC has been cautious about recognising Slovenia's declaration of independence and why they are intervening to try and stop the war.

NATIONAL CONFLICTS IN RECENT YUGOSLAV HISTORY

April 1941 The Italian fascists and German Nazi occupiers create the fascist Croatian state with Ante Pavelic (Ustase leader) as President. 350,000 Serbs are massacred.

May 1941 Formation of Serbian Chetnik guerrillas by Mihailovic based in Serbia. Later defeated by Communist Partisans led by Tito, who had formed a national army from all Yugoslav nationalities.

December 1944 Albanian uprising in Kosovo against Serbian Partisans who had treated the Albanians little better than the Serbian monarchists. Rising was crushed.

1945-1966 Period of Serbian domination through State Security Police led by Alexander Rankovic. Kosovo ruled under quasi martial law. Rankovic dismissed in 1966 after scandal involving bugging Tito's home

1966 Dismissal of Rankovic leads to rebirth of Croatian nationalism inside and outside Communist Party over language issues and economic decentralisation. Tito successfully thwarts nationalists which leads to purge of Croatian and Serbian parties.

1966, 1968, 1981 Major uprisings by Kosovo Albanians against Serbian domination.

1989 Uprising and general strike by Albanians to defend their rights under Yugoslav constitution.



MAIN NATIONAL GROUPS IN THE YUGOSLAV FEDERATION	
SERBIA	pop. 9.9m
Serbs	66.4%
Albanians (Kosovo)	14.0%
Croats	16.0%
Muslims	2.3%
CROATIA	pop. 4.6m
Croats	75.1%
Serbs	11.5%
SLOVENIA	pop. 1.9m
Slovenes	90.5%
Serbs	2.2%
Croats	2.9%
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	pop. 4.4m
Muslims	39.2%
Serbs	32.2%
Croats	18.4%
MONTENEGRO	pop. 632,000
Montenegrins	68.0%
Muslims	13.4%
Albanians	6.5%
MACEDONIA	pop. 1.9m
Macedonians	67.0%
Albanians	19.8%
Serbs	2.3%
KOSOVO	pop. 2m
Albanians	77.4%
Serbs	13.2%
VOJVODINA	pop. 2m
Serbs	54.4%
Hungarians	18.9%

Nobody on the left doubts that the British media is biased. It goes without saying that the hacks of the press and the well-oiled producers of TV toe the line as far as presenting us with an establishment view of the world. But within their own limits, believe it or not, there is a spectrum of bias.

Some people for instance hold on to the idea that there is such a thing as 'objective reporting' which tries to present a balanced view by giving both sides a chance to say their piece. Generally it is fair to say that the public expect this and those who are not on the left actually believe that what they see on TV or read in the papers is true.

Viewers of Channel Four's *Dispatches*, for example, might have been heartened by the series especially since it showed recently how the police and the press had conspired to fit up Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield. Such programmes might give cause for viewers to believe that this documentary series is at least honest or for once biased towards the left. For anyone holding such views the 5 June *Dispatches* 'Castro's Secret Fix' would have come as a rude shock.

This so-called investigation into Fidel Castro's purported involvement in cocaine smuggling was so deliberately biased and its factual base so distorted that one might easily assume that it was the product of the CIA or perhaps the ultra-right Cuban American National Foundation, the Miami-based group of exiles and would-be politicians who dream

Dispatches' secret fix

With the end of the Gulf War imperialism has turned its attention to isolating and undermining socialist Cuba. Part of its campaign is a permanent barrage of media lies and misinformation. Deployed in the service of this campaign has been the British media. STEVE WILKINSON, a member of the Britain-Cuba Resource Centre exposes one particularly vicious piece of bourgeois propaganda.



Division General Ochoa Sánchez being tried by the Court of Honour for drug dealing.

one day of taking control of Cuba.

There has been a spate of films about Cuba recently on TV. Most have been snide, typically disparag-

ing accounts of the difficulties that the Revolution is encountering as a result of the changes which have taken place in the East. We are being

subjected to the idea that Castro is doomed, the Revolution has failed and it is now only a matter of time before it crumbles. But none of these programmes has tried with such vehemence to rubbish the Revolution like this offering from Channel 4.

The film was made by a US-based company called Frontline Features of Boston, Massachusetts. The producers, American, Stephanie Tepper and Briton, William Crann, deny any connection with the CIA or the CANF but such claims are to be expected. Nevertheless, they cannot deny that their film follows closely the propaganda of both organisations.

The premise of the show was that drugs are a two-edged sword for Cuba, providing both much needed currency and undermining US society from within. At one point the narrator said: 'Fidel Castro used drug-running as a political weapon in his war against Yankee imperialism'. By making such an accusation, the film set up Cuba as the enemy of the American people on two scores: ideology and drug trafficking. The two became

inseparable and this is precisely the central theme of the Reagan/Bush and CANF campaigns against Cuba for the past ten years.

That the US has tried to undermine the Revolution since it began in 1959 needs no documentation here. The question is how do policy planners justify such aggressions as the Bay of Pigs, the embargo and the illegal broadcasting of propaganda TV. A great deal of thought has to go into creating the right image. Some so-called enemies of America are easy targets. Saddam Hussein, for example, did not endear himself to the mass of people by carrying out genocide on the Kurds, and Panama's 'strongman' Noriega wasn't exactly ever the people's choice. For the CIA or the State Department to paint these people as villains was not difficult.

With Cuba and Fidel it is a little different. Nonetheless it hasn't stopped them trying and their basic tack is this: Fidel Castro is so unscrupulously bent on destroying the USA that he would stoop to drug dealing in order to fulfil his maniacal dream. If the American public (and British) can be convinced that Fidel is a drug dealer, they won't be too upset if the US one day decides to invade.

Channel Four's *Dispatches* film fitted this scheme of things like a glove and the techniques it used might have come straight out of the Joseph Goebbels Handbook.

Let's look at a few of these techniques.

DOCTORS OF EXPERTISE

Dispatches' sources on Cuba were all chosen from the political right yet were not credited as such. The impression given to the viewer was that these were experts who were speaking in an objective manner but nothing could be further from the truth.

The two key sources were Israeli academic Rachel Ehrenfeld and journalist Roger Fontaine. Ehrenfeld has published a book called *Narco-terrorism* which has recently become dated as a result of Perestroika. Its main thesis is that the Soviet Union and Cuba use drug smuggling to finance terrorism throughout the world and particularly in Israel and Central America. She did all her research as a fellow at Freedom House, an institution with close connections to the CANF. Fontaine was a National Security aide in the Reagan administration and worked alongside Oliver North. El Salvador's brutal leader Roberto D'Aubuisson regarded him as a personal friend. Today he works as a writer for the *Washington Times* (not *Post*) a paper owned entirely by the Reverend Syung Yung Moon.

The remaining sources were convicted or indicted drug traffickers, some of whom had admitted trading 'information' for leniency, and former Cuban officials who have defected to the US. Among them was Rafael Del Pino, a retired Air Force General who now works regularly for the US propaganda radio station Radio Marti. Another defector, Juan Antonio Rodriguez, who was identified on the film as a former intelligence 'officer', was quoted in the *Reader's Digest* (March 1990) as having offered 'as currency' for asylum in the US, a statement which claimed that Cuba was developing the nuclear bomb and nerve gas! Oddly enough, not even the most rightwing journo has followed up such a juicy lead.

THE BIG LIE AND TWISTED FACTS

Dispatches interwove statements from these so-called experts, defectors and drug traffickers, with actual facts relating to the well-documented two-year involvement of some members of the Cuban Ministry of the Interior (MININT) in assisting sporadic drug transshipments from 1987 to

POLEMIC AGAINST THE AMERICAN WEEKLY GUARDIAN

Golden road to capitalism

The following article is by Ana Lucia Gelabert, a communist of Cuban descent, jailed in the USA. It is a communist polemic against an article on Cuba by Milton Fisk in the 28 June issue of the US radical/left weekly *The Guardian*. In a feature - 'Cuban communists debate new tasks' - Milton Fisk expresses all the contradictions, confusions and inconsistencies of 'liberal sympathisers' for Cuba who, lacking an anti-imperialist outlook, end up denigrating the Cuban revolution.

Essentially Mr Fisk advises us Cubans to urgently 'introduce liberal values', by which he means pluralism and sweeping reforms in favor of a market economy, lest the gains of the revolution be swept away à la Eastern Europe. He admonishes us, correctly in my view, that not even such sweeping capitalist-restorationist 'reforms' may change US policy towards Cuba. But these should nonetheless be implemented, says he, since time for Cuba is running short and 'in the long run the advantage lies with the United States'.

Further on Mr Fisk decries the lack of widespread worker participation, of independent mass organizations, of dissent without reprisals, of, according to him the word of a man (Fidel Castro) being decisive and the Party's carefully constructing the context of any debate. He echoes so-called human rights activist Elizardo Sánchez' complaints about the '1989 Ochoa drug trial [which] violated legal norms'.

It is understandable that Mr Fisk is shocked by the execution of Ochoa. Unlike in the United States or Panama, to name two, where big time drug dealers are, respectively, elected or US-militarily appointed to the presidency, in revolutionary Cuba we shoot them.

Today as in Lenin's time, terms like democracy or pluralism have a class connotation: democracy or pluralism for whom, for which social class? George Bush correctly says that today, except for Cuba, everyone in the Americas enjoys democracy. Since for Bush only the richest 10% count as humans, it is sufficient for him that the Wall Street tycoons, the Sixteen

Families of El Salvador or the emirs of Al-Quwuay control political power to proclaim democracy in those places. Even for lesbians and gays, by far the most brutalized group in the



Pharisean society, Bush-style democracy works fine provided that the lesbians/gays in question belong to the richest 10%. However the 100 million Latin Americans in the most abject poverty, the New York Tompkins Square evictees, lesbians and gays murdered by the Klan - in or out of uniform - generally the remaining 90% and especially so if colored, virtually 4/5ths of the human race, count for nothing. Since it is precisely this 90%, or its equivalent, that control political power in Cuba, it is understandable to hear Bush saying that Cuba has no democracy.

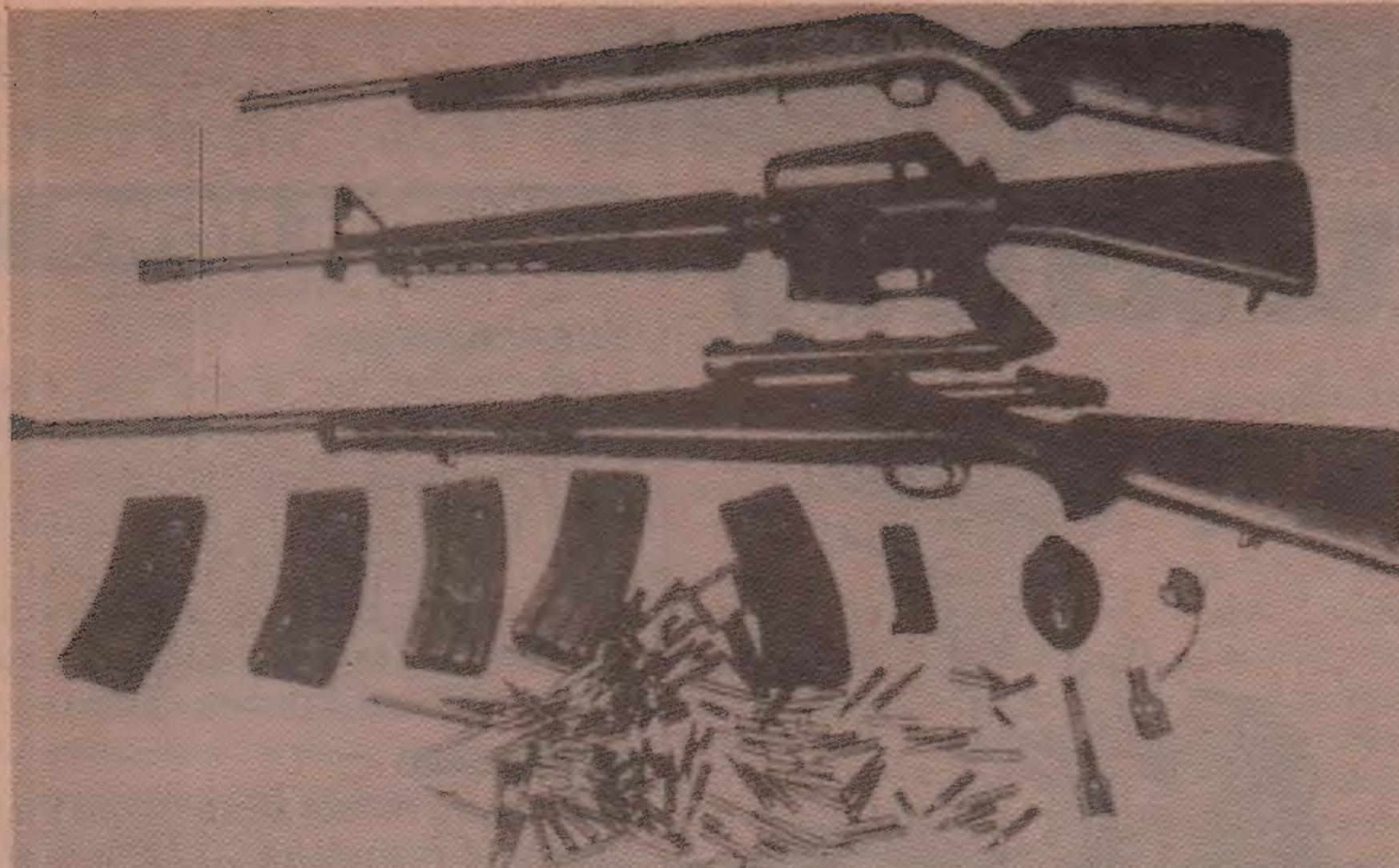
In his upper class miopia Mr Fisk cannot see his own *non sequiturs*: if three million Cubans, that is 30% of the population, managed to take part in the over 80,000 assemblies leading to the Fourth Congress - meetings lasting long hours and where opinions were far from unanimous, nay, preference was given to open discussion of 'unpopular' or taboo subjects, often aired over the radio - how is that reconciled with the lack of mass participation he decries? Why, that 30% exceed the percentage of Americans who clicked in TweedleBush to the White House. Moreover the well-known workers' microbrigades and contingents, the innovators who just in 1990 implemented over 8,000 new patents and rationalizations - the equivalent in the United States, considering population and industrial development, would be over 700,000 inventions thought of by workers in one year - the one million workers marching in Havana last May Day to proclaim their staunch commitment to socialism, the 7 million women and men that stand ready to defend

Marxism-Leninism in the War of All the People, isn't that mass participation? What other country in the Americas can dare to arm its entire population? Of course for Mr Fisk these millions don't count: they are dismissed as the 'no one in Havana' doubting the eventual fall of revolutionary Cuba.

Moreover we know how militarily powerful the United States is today, have no illusions about it and are sure that before this century ends we will have to fight imperialist forces on our fair homeland and the seas and skies around her. We know the implications and ramifications of it all and we are ready. We are still not afraid. Furthermore we shall emerge victorious from that war which we do not want and will not provoke, no matter how long it takes to reach victory. Then, after victory, the construction of socialism will continue, on still firmer grounds.

But Marxism-Leninism is a failure!, jumpdances Mr Fisk pointing to eastern Europe. False, Mr Fisk. It's capitalism that has been a failure. Eastern Europe was not a failure of Marxism-Leninism, but of the lack of it. Of its abandonment from the 1950s on, when socialist construction was paralysed in those countries to favor a policy of opportunism and collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Hand in hand with the bureaucratization and corruption of the communist-bourgeois parties: communist in words, bourgeois in facts.

On the other hand, what has capitalism to offer us poor, colored, third-worldish Cubans? Trinkets galore from Woolworths or a Sears Roebuck catalog? We don't want them. A Bush recommendation for most-favored nation or readmission to the OAS? Please don't insult us. A second Miami with its slums, rampant drug traffic, sexism and homophobia, violence and brutal police, homeless people, endemic unemployment mixed with superexploitation at the factorías? Or the fate now suffered by 4 billion human beings in our Blue Planet, who aren't victims of socialism but of the most brutal and inhumane capitalism of the neocolonial countries, under conditions much worse than the worst ever seen in Miami or New York? Thanks but no thanks. We have been there already. ■



1989, which culminated in the July 1989 drug trials. The result was an apparent airtight indictment of Fidel Castro. The viewer heard repeated from different mouths the statement that Fidel 'must have sanctioned the drug deals', 'nothing goes on there without him saying so', etc. This big lie technique was backed up by film of the actual trial in which one of the defendants is seen apparently breaking down in fear, according to the narrator, because he was accusing Fidel right there of having given the order to deal in drugs.

In fact the filmmakers edited the film in such a way as to give this impression. A whole chunk of Miguel Ruiz's testimony was taken out and the two bits spliced together again to make it appear as if he was accusing Castro. A reading of the transcript shows that Ruiz was quoting others as having said this. Namely, his superiors in MININT who had lied in order to justify themselves. In fact all the defendants at the trial said that they had no orders from above, that their actions were purely selfish and that they were aware that what they were doing would be detrimental to the Revolution. In trying to give the impression that this was a show trial the filmmakers omitted this aspect entirely. Indeed, in order to convince the audience of their veracity, the filmmakers had to ignore a lot of contrary findings including those made by members of the US Congress, State Department Reports, and the conclusions of numerous journalists and specialists on Cuba, none of whom were interviewed on the programme.

Although the film tried to establish Castro's personal involvement through the statements of defectors, Tad Szulc, a liberal, who has written the most thorough biography of the Cuban president, found such claims inconsistent with his personality and against logic. Even US officials based in Havana have voiced doubts that Castro knew of the trafficking.

With the exception of the MININT involvement from 1987 to 1989, no pattern of drug transshipments through Cuba has ever been established by the US Drug Enforcement Agency. In fact Frances Mullen, then director of the DEA, admitted as much in congressional hearings on Cuban involvement in narcotics trafficking in the period 1982-84. The most that Mullen could offer the committee was flimsy, circumstantial evidence in two unrelated, isolated instances which suggested that the drug runners had attempted to use Cuban waters or air space. Yet *Dispatches* declared that Cuba was officially and routinely involved throughout the 1980s.

The film made the claim that Cuba had financed Colombia's M19 guerrillas from drug money. This story was in fact discredited in 1984. It had been used by the Reagan administration in 1982 but later dropped when the DEA admitted it was a red herring put about by, among others, the CANF.

As a concession to the idea that they were being fair, the filmmakers did use selected statements by Fidel and former Cuban Justice minister Juan Escalona made at the UN conference on Crime Prevention held in Havana in August 1990. But although both of them spoke at length of the

measures that Cuba was taking to eliminate drug trafficking, none of the statements were included in the *Dispatches* report.

CONSPICUOUS OMISSIONS

These omissions were strange indeed considering that a contemporaneous US State Department report dated 10 August 1990 corroborated the truth of the Cuban statements. Indeed the report contradicted the statements made in the film that Cuba is still protecting drug traffickers. The report also commented that Cuba has taken steps to improve narcotics interdiction, improved its inspection regime and has spoken out against trafficking. Also according to the report the United States and Cuban authorities regularly exchange information about investigations and interdictions.

But not only did *Dispatches* fail to recognise such actions, it failed to note the frequent Cuban government offer of a complete drug interdiction agreement with the US – an offer which has been consistently refused by the State Department. Washington's refusal to work more closely with Cuba has angered not a few Congressmen including Charles Rangel (Dem NY) chair of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control. He has said that the government's actions are irresponsible. He told the *New York Times* in 1989: 'It is drugs not Communists that are killing our kids'. Rangel of course did not appear on the *Dispatches* film.

Dispatches did not mention that Cuba has arrested hundreds of drug smugglers in its waters and currently holds 17 American citizens in its jails, all of whom were arrested trying to traffic drugs. Repeated attempts to extradite them to the US have failed.

But perhaps the most astonishing omission from the programme was the failure to mention the US coast guard's shelling of an unarmed Cuban cargo boat in January 1990, when the captain refused to permit US agents to board the vessel. Coast guard officials insisted that the boat, making a routine cargo run from Cuba to Mexico, was carrying drugs. The Mexican officials who searched the boat found no evidence. Having failed to report this incident, the filmmakers had the audacity to quote a coast guard official as saying that Cuba improperly denies them access to their waters!

CONCLUSIONS

Charges that Cuba deals in drugs are nothing new. In 1966 a Senate report accused Castro of selling 'Red Chinese heroin' to finance guerrilla activities. In the eighties this has been turned into Medellin cocaine. The Reagan and Bush administrations have intensified this campaign to discredit the Revolution. It has nothing to do with controlling drugs but rather is intended to fuel hostile public opinion in order to justify foreign policy interests. *Dispatches* and Channel Four supported this campaign irresponsibly and unprofessionally. ■

Steve Wilkinson is a member of the Britain-Cuba Resource Centre, which campaigns in solidarity with Cuba. BCRC are making a formal complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, Grosvenor Gardens House, 35 Grosvenor Gardens, SW1W 0OF, and would like your support. Please write to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission complaining about the programme's bias.

Ultra-left lies from The Leninist

The Leninist newspaper has for some time attempted to discredit the RCG. Its campaign would be quite ineffectual and harmless but for the sustained lying and conscious falsehood which could confuse the reader unfamiliar with the facts. We have, therefore, reluctantly decided to respond to one particular attack by someone called Mark Fischer (*The Leninist* 1 May 1991) to show the depths to which this newspaper sinks and to use the opportunity to clarify a few theoretical points about imperialism and the class struggle in Britain.

Mark Fischer attacks the RCG for its 'hopelessly confused positions' during the Gulf War, which, he claims, are being 'hurriedly revised' after the 'ignominious' Iraqi defeat. Affecting shock and anger he directs his invective against 'the despicably dishonest RCG', who 'lying hypocrites' that they are, 'crudely ape the positions of Leninism' in the 'aftermath of the war'. Inevitably being no argument, *The Leninist*, to sustain its case, can only adopt the methods of Murdoch and Maxwell – the shameless publication of lies and fabrications.

Suggesting that the RCG supported Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime, Fischer writes:

'During the war, the RCG affiliated to the RCP-dominated Hands off the Middle East (HOME) committee, whose key distinctive slogan was 'Victory to Iraq!' Not once did they raise a criticism of this aspect of HOME's platform!'

The facts, of which Fischer is aware, speak otherwise. The RCG did, in fact, conduct a long struggle in HOME opposing the adoption of this slogan. When outvoted we refused to participate in any HOME contingents using the slogan. On 25 February 1991, we officially withdrew from the Committee. In our statement we explained:

'Since the outbreak of war HOME has included in its platform the slogan 'Victory to Iraq'. The RCG will not accept this decision and cannot remain in HOME.'

We also explained the political basis for our decision:

'... the slogan 'Victory to Iraq' is closely identified with the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist regime is viciously anti-working class, anti-communist and anti-Kurdish. Communists in Britain cannot take up such a slogan.'

So why does Fischer lie? Why does he want to tar us with the brush of having supported Saddam Hussein? Maybe to muddy the water and cover up *The Leninist*'s own position. It rejected the only consistent anti-imperialist demands which made no concessions to Saddam Hussein: the anti-imperialist and anti-Ba'ath call for 'Self-Determination for Kurdistan'. The RCG fought to include this and the demand for 'Victory to the Palestinian Revolution' in the HOME Committee platform. Mark Fischer and his colleagues refused to support our proposals. Instead they sneaked out of the Committee.

Fischer proceeds to 'strengthen' his 'argument' that the RCG supported the Ba'ath regime... with a further fabrication. Fischer quotes FRFI as follows:

'We do not call for the defeat (revolutionary or otherwise) of Iraq... [should we] call on Iraqi and Middle Eastern revolutionaries to organise insurrection against the Saddam Hussein regime?... we politely refuse... [revolutionaries should] if necessary fight alongside the Iraqi army. This [is] a necessary and preliminary stage.'

Thus Fischer suggests the RCG was urging British communists to fight alongside the Iraqi army. He takes three paragraphs from a long reply by Eddie Abrahams to a letter from Comrade Hurst

published in FRFI 98. Fischer, quite unashamedly, deletes the critical passages and stitches up what remains to produce 'evidence'. By means of such 'creative quoting' Fischer conflates into one what in fact are two separate issues: the role and tasks of communists in Britain and the position of revolutionaries in the Middle East. Here is what we actually wrote:

'Comrade Hurst's slogan "for a revolutionary defeat of both sides" distracts from our main task, and is confused. We do not call for the defeat (revolutionary or otherwise) of Iraq. At the moment the biggest danger to the working class in the Middle East is not Saddam Hussein but imperialism. (emphasis added)

Is comrade Hurst demanding that we in Britain call on Iraqi and Middle Eastern revolutionaries to organise revolutionary insurrection against the Saddam Hussein regime just as the imperialists have placed half a million troops to conquer the region, suppress the anti-imperialist forces and destroy the working class? If he is, we politely refuse the offer.

Middle Eastern revolutionaries have themselves rejected the slogan for a 'revolutionary defeat of both sides'. They are organising to resist and defeat the imperialist invasion of the Gulf and if necessary fight alongside the Iraqi army. They see this as a necessary and preliminary stage in achieving their ultimate aims. They have correctly identified imperialism as the main danger of the period.'

We quote this at length in order to highlight an elementary principle of Leninism that supporters of *The Leninist* have forgotten. Imperialism divides the world between a handful of imperialist and a majority of oppressed nations. Politically communists have different tasks depending on whether they work in the imperialist or oppressed nation. *The Leninist* distorts the RCG's principled position – for communists in the imperialist countries, true internationalism consists in building a movement against British imperialism – in order to cover up its own rejection of internationalism.

The Leninist sought to develop a theoretical basis for its rejection of internationalism and for its support of Comrade Hurst's position. Iraq, they argued, is a proto-imperialist power. According to Fischer it 'is driven by the necessity of becoming imperialist'. Having eliminated the fundamental and qualitative difference between imperialism and Iraq, they then argued that communists could side with neither (imperialist) power but should have instead called for the 'revolutionary defeat of both sides'.

The RCG rejects the theory of Iraqi proto-imperialism – more decidedly since the end of the war! We have no wish to 'ape' Mark Fischer. But for some obscure reason he wants to persuade his readers otherwise! For his 'evidence' he doctors yet another quote:

'Come FRFI No 100 and the spineless Mr Abrahams is surely describing the Iraqi regime as "imperialistic". Surely some explanation is required here.'

What we actually wrote, in reviewing a book on Iraq, is the following:

'An account of the country's economic development helps explain the material basis for the expansionist and imperialistic ambitions (emphasis added) of the Ba'ath Party.'

Even Mark Fischer must know that having ambitions to be something is not the same as actually being that thing. For example, if I were to state that Mark Fischer has Leninist ambitions, I may possibly be right. But to claim that his ambition actually makes him a Leninist would be totally unfounded. The ruling classes of oppressed nations inevitably harbour their own expansionist, imperialistic ambitions; they are, after all, agents of capital. But this does not make them imperialist.

The Leninist, vulgar empiricists that they are, see certain technical economic forms of certain features of imperialism in the Iraqi economy and conclude it is proto-imperialist! Clearly a bizarre view in the light of Iraq's real economic position.

Can a serious Marxist claim that Iraqi banks, cartels and monopolies participate, along with those of the USA, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Sweden etc, in the seizure of the world's raw materials, in the economic partition of the world and its territorial partition? Does Iraqi capital participate in the systematic plunder of peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America? Is it joining the campaign to carve up Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union?

The Leninist's characterisation of Iraq as a 'medium level developed capitalist country' is used to deny Lenin's description of imperialism as a system which divides the world between a handful of oppressor nations and a mass of oppressed nations.

To substantiate their position, Jack Conrad argues that Iraq went from being on a par with Bangladesh and India in terms of per capita production to the level of Greece and Spain (*The Leninist* 100). This is nonsense. Iraq was never on a par with Bangladesh and India and has made no headway in catching up with Greece and Spain as the following per capita income figures show:

	1966	1988
Iraq	\$270	\$2140
Spain	\$640	\$7740
Greece	\$660	\$5213
India	\$70	\$330
Pakistan	\$90	\$170

In other words, from 1966 to 1988 Iraq's per capita income declined from 42.2% of Spain's to 27.6% and went from 40.9% of Greece's to 41%!

Iraq is a Third World nation, an oppressed nation. Non-oil products account for just two per cent of Iraq's export earnings. At maximum Iraq's refining capacity reaches 10 per cent of its oil output. Thus, Iraq is dependent on the export of a single commodity whose international market is controlled by a handful of transnational corporations. On almost every indicator Iraq reflects the conditions of an oppressed nation: there is one doctor for every 1,752 people, compared with 1:318 in Spain and 1:344 in Greece. Infant mortality before the Gulf war stood at 68 per 1,000 live births compared with 9.1 per 1,000 in the European community and 71 per 1,000 for the world as a whole. Life expectancy in Iraq, again before the Gulf war, was 64 years, compared with 75 years for the European community and 61 for the world as a whole.

Rejecting the Marxist theory of imperialism, *The Leninist*, like many a Trotskyist grouping, refuses to accept that real internationalism consists in fighting imperialism at home – not adopting a sophisticated swagger. *The Leninist* theory and its slogan during the Gulf war proved to be nothing but an opportunist subterfuge. It enabled them to pose as radical opponents of both imperialism and Saddam Hussein without having to engage in the hard battle to build an anti-imperialist movement here in Britain.

Old style Trotskyists refuse to oppose imperialist aggression on the grounds that the opposition – national liberation movements – are petit-bourgeois. Now comes *The Leninist* with their reasoning: the ruling class of oppressed nations is imperialist! It all boils down to the same thing – an opportunist refusal to oppose British imperialism.

Eddie Abrahams/Trevor Rayne

Prescriptions for brutality

Medical power in prisons - the prison medical service in England, 1774-1989 Joe Sim, Open University Press 1990, 212 pp.

At a time when serious questions are being asked about the Prison Medical Service (PMS) - Labour MP John Battle has put forward a Private Member's Bill demanding the PMS be brought within the NHS - this book makes a valuable contribution to the debate on the role of the PMS. The book focuses on the origins, development and consolidation of medical power in English prisons.

Sim traces how the PMS has become a servant of an 'authoritarian state' and achieved a pivotal position within the contemporary criminal justice system. Sim argues 'sentencing is not concerned to control crime, rather it is concerned to instil discipline into those people who are no longer controlled by the self-discipline machine of work and who might become increasingly resentful that they are being made to pay the price of economic recession'. Prisons exist to police social divisions and protect the social relations of private property. The PMS has become a key agent of state repression.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, judges handed out more and more long sentences so that by 1985 more than a fifth of the adult male prison population were long-term prisoners. In 1957 there were 140 lifers. By November 1986 this figure had increased to over 2,000. The figure for women rose from seven to 57. This development was accompanied by increased emphasis on security and control. Such oppression inevitably builds resistance and this was increasingly blamed on a small number of difficult and subversive prisoners

who apparently manipulated an otherwise quiescent prison population into riot and demonstration. Prison policy was to individualise and isolate these prisoners. In this the PMS has played a central role. As early as 1965, in a memorandum to the Royal Commission on the Penal System, the PMS argued that in view of the increasing numbers of 'difficult and disturbed inmates', medical opinion should be represented on policy making on the Prison Board.



Following uprisings in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s at Parkhurst, Gartree, Wormwood Scrubs, Albany and Hull, the PMS turned a blind eye to the cruel reprisals inflicted on prisoners. To help control prisoners the PMS has increasingly used powerful behaviour-modifying drugs like paraldehyde and chlorpromazine to establish a 'quiet prison'. Many prisons have prescribed as many as 300 doses of drugs per prisoner per year. Drugs are especially prescribed to help control female prisoners. Between January 1984 and March 1985 over 145,000 doses of anti-depressants, sedatives and tranquilisers were dispersed to women - five times as many doses as received by men.

The PMS also presides over physical conditions that have produced a

horrendous death rate. Between 1987 and December 1988, 159 people died in English and Welsh prisons: 67 'committed suicide'. Between May 1988 and February 1989, five young men hanged themselves in Armley's Remand Wing. In addition there were 42 suicide attempts and 19 self-mutilations in seven months in 1989. At Risley Remand Centre staff ignored instructions governing potential suicide risks and six people killed themselves between July 1987 and July 1988. In Brixton between January and October 1989, eight people committed suicide. In the case of Paul Worrell a judge said the psychiatric wing of Brixton 'did not have to give the same standard of care as an outside mental hospital'.

Medical power in the judicial system is used to maintain the oppression of black people who are overrepresented in regional secure units and high security units like Broadmoor. In the West Midlands Afro-Caribbeans are 25 times more likely than white people to be placed under psychiatric care by the courts. Black people's reaction to stress is more likely to be viewed as symptomatic of schizophrenia than similar behaviour by white people. Sim devotes a quarter of his book to the treatment of females. Women prisoners have been studied, probed and tested because female criminality and ill-discipline lay in their 'peculiar temperament and biology', and because they posed a threat to the social order of stable family relationships. The personal and moral life of female prisoners is the domain of the PMS. The intense regulation and surveillance of women prisoners has led to women being disciplined more than twice as often as men. Medical and psychiatric labels help reinforce this subordination of women.

In the 18th and 19th century medical theory looked at health in terms of morality, discipline, decency, order, propriety and respectful subordination, thus meeting the requirements of the prisons. Doctors became centrally involved in certifying physical punishment or carrying it out in the name of treatment. Perhaps one of the most brutal forms of treatment in English prisons was the use of the hobble - a technique reserved for women in the 1860s. An appliance of wood and leather straps fastened legs and feet back behind the knees to the thighs. The arms were fastened down so that the hands could not be raised to the mouth. The prisoner was forced to rest on her knees with her back to a wall. She had to be spoon fed.



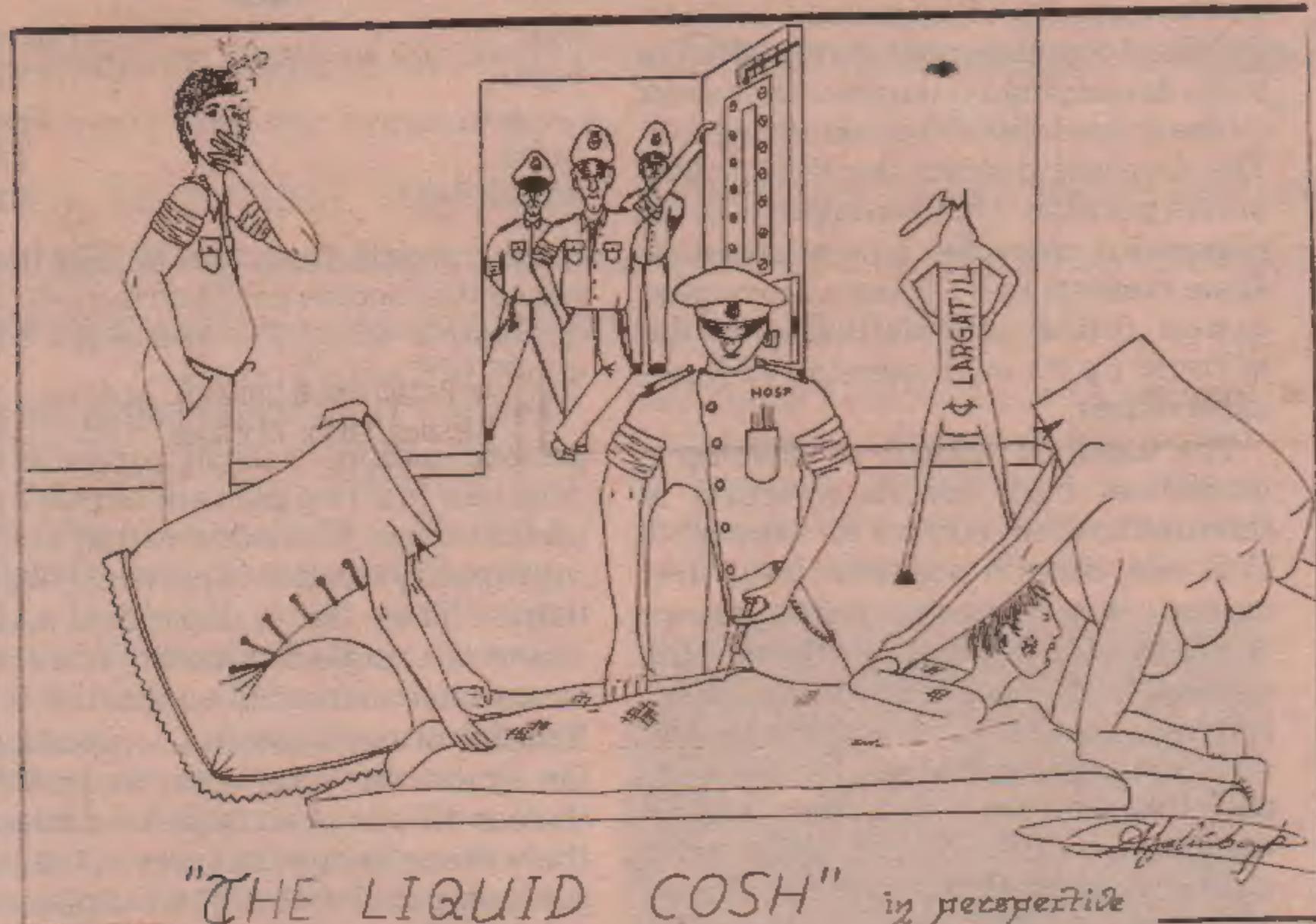
With the rise of 19th-century science and rationalism the medical world argued how it was best placed to understand and control criminals. In 1897 *The Lancet* carried an article which called prisons 'hospitals for the remedial treatment of depraved bodies and diseased minds'. Throughout the 20th century there was a rise in the number of psychologists, psychiatrists, probation officers and social workers, all putting forward theories about what is wrong with prisoners. Their aim has been to get prisoners in the right frame of mind to lead a 'virtuous' and 'normal' life on release. Crime became due to the individual weakness of the criminals - they were 'underdeveloped', they had 'personality inadequacies', or a 'lack of adjustment', or the wrong temperament and physique. These weaknesses were and continue to be dealt with by violence to the prisoner's mind and body.

Whenever a crisis occurs for the PMS, Sim describes how working parties and inquiries are used to ensure business as usual:

'Working parties, committees of inquiry, judicial inquiries and royal commissions all have perennially played a part in the repertoire of responses commanded by the British state when an institution is in crisis. They have a long history in Britain and serve an important legitimising function for political practice.'

They are part of a process in which fundamental alternatives to the prevailing orthodoxy are closed off and marginalised. The evidence indicts the view that the profession and the institution can be reformed. They have to be swept away. ■

Gordon Teal



"THE LIQUID COSH" in perspective

The Hate Factory

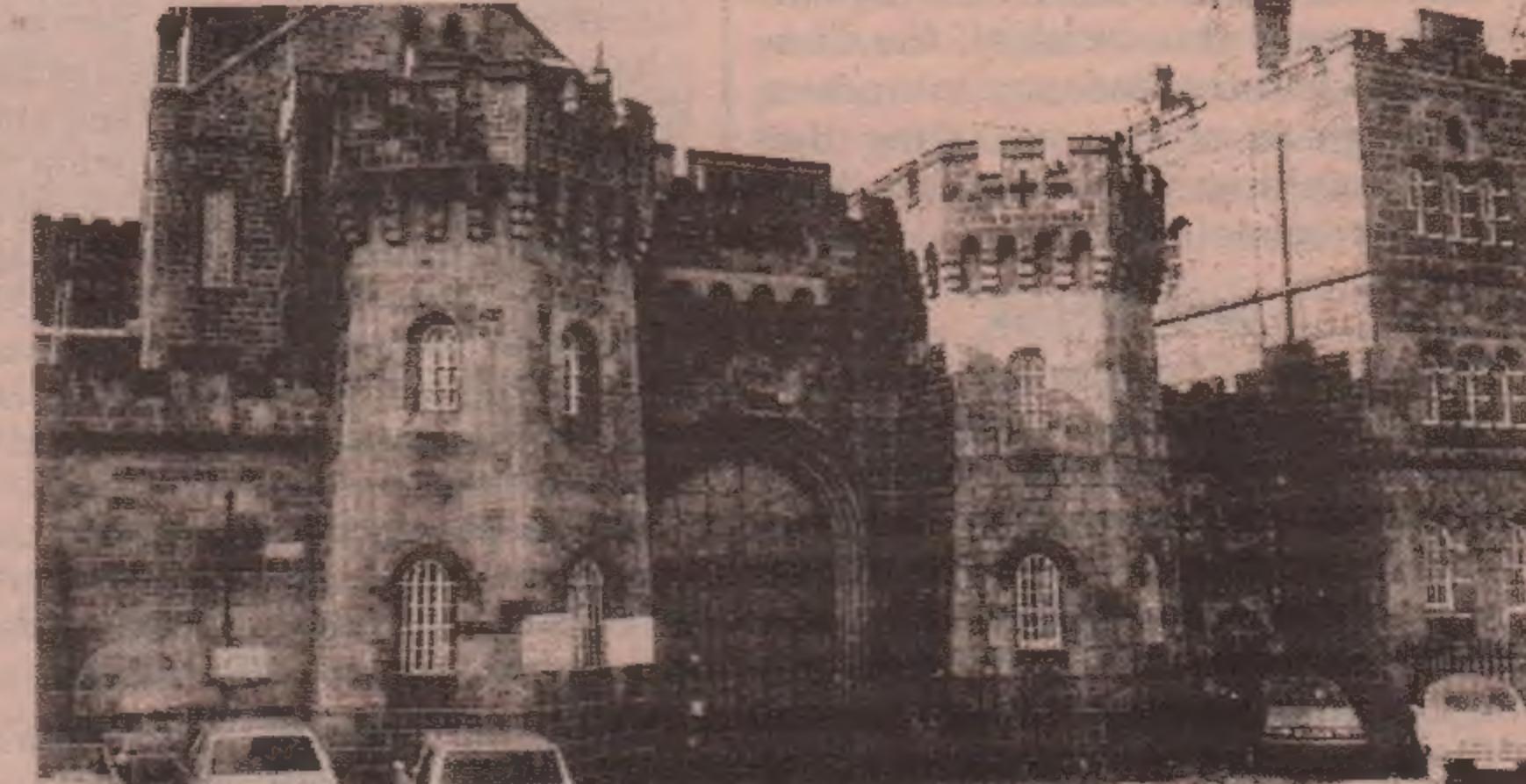
On 22 April 1991 Grenada TV screened *The Hate Factory*, first half of a two part documentary on prison brutality. ERIC ALLISON gives his impression of the programme:

It is difficult to write objectively about this programme: a) I obviously applaud any attempt to show the outside world what goes on 'inside' and b) I played a minor part in the research of the documentary so I'm bound to be biased. However, I have canvassed opinions across a broad range and I am convinced that this was a magnificent example of investigative journalism by Andy Bell and his team.

The programme dealt with several stories of prisoners who had been badly physically abused by prison staff. In all cases the impression conveyed was that these men were telling the truth and, of course, there was medical evidence to back up their allegations. (And in some instances the Home Office had attempted to do deals with the men in order to shut

them up.) A more personal impression was that I smelled and felt the fear that these men must have experienced - in a way I have never done before outside prison. I salute the men (some still serving time) who had the courage to speak out.

The most shocking indictment was the case of Billy Hadad who spat at a screw one morning. For that he was dragged to a strip cell at Hull and savagely beaten. One of his assailants grabbed Billy's penis and pulled - pulled so hard that the penis was torn from its root. We, the viewers, saw photographic proof of the damage. I presume that the Home Office, the police who 'investigated' the matter and those who conducted the sick joke of the inevitable internal inquiry, saw the same photographs. In the event, no action was taken.



Armley Prison: brutal treatment drove five prisoners to hang themselves May 1988 - February 1989

Angela Rumbold, the Minister of State for Prisons, is on record as saying that there was, 'no evidence to support Mr Hadad's allegations'.

Finally, I must mention Bernard Kay and Eddie Holland. Bernard was abused in the 'hospital' at Armley; he is getting back at his tormentors and played a massive part in putting this programme together from 'inside'. Eddie Holland spoke with such feel-

ing that no-one who watched could have doubted his words. His account of meeting Bernard Kay in Armley brought tears to my eyes.

The Prison Department and the Prison Officers Association refused to take part in the programme. I suspect that the former are afraid of the latter at the moment. Others are clearly not, this programme was evidence of that fact. ■

INSIDE NEWS

OVERCROWDING

HMP Chelmsford is now England's most overcrowded prison, with 65% more prisoners than it is designed to hold. It is followed by Birmingham - 63%; Leicester - 58%; Bedford - 58%; Leeds (the most overcrowded in 1990); Reading - 51%; Canterbury - 50% and Brixton - 50%.

FRANKLAND

Contrary to Home Office claims that a protest at Frankland on 22 June was resolved peacefully, prisoners involved have given accounts of staff brutality in the breaking up of the protest. 47 prisoners who had barricaded a landing on D-wing of the prison in protest over further reductions in free association time, were transferred from the prison and claim to have been beaten by riot squads after their barricade was set on fire by screws using thermal cutting equipment.

PAUL ROSS

Paul Ross, who helped organise the last Long Lartin Prison Conference on prisoners' families, was 'ghosted' from the prison in June in 'the interests of good order and discipline'. Paul, who has consistently defended the rights of prisoners, was moved because, in the words of a prison official at Long Lartin, he was creating 'too much paperwork for the Home Office'. After a month in Wandsworth, Paul was moved again to Albany and placed in solitary confinement. Please send letters and cards of support to Paul Ross (L43279) at HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5LS.

FREE THE BRIDGEWATER THREE!

Ann Whelan, mother of Michael Hickey, spoke to FRFI about the campaign to clear the names of the four men framed in 1979 for the killing of Carl Bridgewater.

'The more horrific the crime, especially if it goes on and the police are no nearer to solving it, then if you're a petty criminal, or black - you're just ripe for the picking. They think nobody will care, and they harass these people and find the weakest link, which in our case was Pat Molloy who died in prison. He signed a confession which was beaten out of him. When they got to trial his barrister advised him not to take the witness stand which prevented the other three men from challenging his confession.'

'The legal position now as far as the Court of Appeal is concerned is - "You've had it!" They really con you. We went back on one point: a confession alleged to have been made by one of the men to a prisoner. The prisoner went to the Court of Appeal and said he made it all up. But when we got there, "Their Lordships" said: "Come on, let's have the lot." So we gave them masses of new evidence. They were going to have everything, drain us because they knew full well they were going to sling it out.'

The only way forward for the Bridgewater Four now is through open public campaigning. Contact the campaign at PO Box 2273, Wythall, Birmingham, B47 6LU.

STOP PRESS

Another victim of a vicious state frame-up is one step nearer to justice. The 'confession' used against Winston Silcott in the Broadwater Farm trial has been discredited by a new forensic test.

Prisoners' birthdays

Brian Keenan B26380 HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS 17 July

Stephen Nordone 758680 HMP Gartree, Leicester Road, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 7RP 2 August

Paul Kavanagh L31888 HMP Full Sutton 12 August

More on the environment, please

Congratulations on sustaining a clear socialist analysis of world events, but what of the ecological/environmental issues of the day? I can understand your desire to avoid being guided onto the agenda set by the mainstream media, and to ignore 'fashionable' issues. However, only a socialist critique of industrial capitalism will explain our environmental crisis and the reasons behind it. Can readers look forward to some of these issues being tackled in the near future?

Yours in solidarity
MICHAEL SMALL
South London

LETTERS

Plunder of the Third World 'not crude'

I'm writing to comment on some of the issues raised by Robert Clough in his recent article 'A Class Apart'.

The real exploitation in the Third World is performed by the Third World ruling class, usually in partnership with multinational capital. The reality of imperialism must not blind us to the fact that they must also be called to account for the suffering that exists in their own countries. Falling living standards in parts of Africa and Latin America in recent years are the result of

actions taken by national (and nationalist) governments desperate to attract foreign capital. There is a very basic reason why the inflow of capital to these countries is shrinking in relative (and, in some cases, absolute) terms: there tend to be greater profits to be made in the industrialised world because, as Gareth Jenkins says, of the vastly greater productivity in certain rich countries.

Although Third World economies are not plundered in the crude way that Clough suggests, they are in a weak and vulnerable position. They rely heavily on the capital, the machinery, the technological knowhow and the markets that

investment in the oppressed nations has been generally at least twice that on investment in the imperialist nations.

By rejecting any rational theory of imperialism, the SWP cannot account for the explosion of bank lending to the Third World in the late 1970s. Yet the massive export of capital that bank lending represented was a response to the crisis of profitability in the imperialist nations, a crisis only very partially resolved by the shakeout of 1980-81. That new lending to the oppressed nations has plummeted since the early 80s is due more to the fact that the rate of plunder of these nations has reached its limits, as expressed in the threatened defaults in the early 1980s.

Nick Wall finds the use of the term 'plunder' distasteful, and prefers to twitter on about the 'weak and vulnerable' position of the Third World. Yet 'plunder' is a correct and scientific description of a process which is extracting on average 30% of the GNP of African countries, quite apart from the profits made by direct investment and through transfer pricing. The plunder is very crude indeed if you happen to be one of the starving victims; maybe not so if you happen to be one of its beneficiaries, however indirect. Then I would agree that you would have a vested interest in prettifying imperialism, mini-

exist in the 'North'. It remains true, therefore, to say that socialism cannot be built on their narrow economic base. This is not to deny the revolutionary potential of the Third World working class. It is to say that any programme for world revolution leaves off a leg and an arm if it rules out the possibility of decisive shifts in the working class of imperialist countries.

The degree of support among workers for the Gulf War was much softer than Clough thinks. There was very little hostility to anti-war activists, and on a range of specific issues people were critical of the way the war was being conducted. Moreover, a large minority of organised

mising its barbaric character and side-tracking attention to the responsibilities of its local lackies.

When Comrade Wall turns to discussing his anti-imperialist campaigns, we get a glimpse of the practical outcome of SWP theory. What were these 'anti-imperialist' campaigns large sections of workers could be drawn into? The Committee, which expressed the pacifist, pro-imperialist views of the CND and the Labour Left, political representatives of privileged working class strata which have benefited from the proceeds of imperialism? Evidently, since that was where the SWP chose to work.

Comrade Wall can spin all the tales he likes about the 'large sections of workers' straining to join anti-imperialist campaigns; the fact is that the only sections that did were Turkish and Kurdish workers, who certainly know something about the 'reality' of imperialism, and with equal certainty went nowhere near the Committee. His fictitious mass of anti-imperialist workers obscures the question which the SWP always fails to answer: why has there been no mass revolutionary, let alone communist movement in any imperialist nation for 60 years?

The reason the SWP does not directly address this is because

workers were strongly anti-war. The SWP initiated anti-war groups in many workplaces which were in the process of trying to set up national networks as the war ended. In short, there was enough of a positive response to reinforce our conviction that, under the right conditions, large sections of the working class in Britain could easily be drawn into anti-imperialist campaigns. As for the facile argument that this should only be done through the 'highly principled' method of denouncing CND, the less said the better.

NICK WALL (SWP member)
The Wirral, Merseyside

their answer is always tinged with racism. How can they deal with the contrast between the slavish submission of workers in the imperialist nations and the experience in Viet Nam, China, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Algeria, Cuba, Nicaragua and so on? They might mention Portugal, but that would prove the opposite of what they want, since the 'decisive shift' of the 1974 democratic revolution was dependent on the success of the colonial liberation movements. No, what they have to say is that socialism cannot be built in Third World countries, so their struggles are to no avail. Instead, you have to be privileged - you have to have achieved a certain level, a certain productivity, in short, you have to live in... an imperialist nation!

Every aspect of SWP theory represents an attempt to do away with the split in the working class, in order to forge alliances with the more radical representatives of its privileged layers. Blame the ruling classes of the Third World for the poverty of their people, not imperialist plunder, so that imperialism can be conjured away. Such a notion is very acceptable to those whose privileged existence depends on that plunder.

Robert Clough

LARKIN BOOKS

Poll Tax: paying to be poor by Lorna Reid, 48pp, £1.95 plus 30p p&p.

The revolutionary road to communism in Britain (Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist Group) 175pp, £1.50 plus 40p p&p.

Murder on the Rock How the British Government got away with murder by Maxine Williams. 64pp., £2.50, plus 40p p&p.

A new path for socialism? Revolutionary renewal in the Soviet Union and Cuba. By David Reed and Trevor Rayne. 21pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

Value and Price in Marx's Capital by David Yaffe. A Revolutionary Communist reprint. 19pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

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himself facing imminent expulsion from the Labour Party.

When the group refused to budge, police were called to manhandle them out of the tent.

Evidently the Labour and union bureaucrats are increasingly nervous about any criticism from outside the 'official' movement under their control. Their own rightward move was obvious from the gala, which they have now decreed should be 'more entertainment, less speakers'!

Yours in solidarity
JEAN SAYER
Edinburgh

Write to

FRFI
BCM Box 5909,
London,
WC1N 3XX

Each month it costs £100 to send our newspaper into prisoners. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription to our Prisoners Fund.

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FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1991 • 15

FRFI social evening:

Saturday 24 August, 8pm, Old Farmhouse Pub, Kentish Town Road, London NW5. Kurdish, Turkish and Azanian music, poetry and food. Tickets £3 waged/£1.50 unwaged available from FRFI sellers.

FRFI Equipment Fund

Thank you for donations received so far. We are still short on our target of £1,000 to buy new equipment for our office to develop the production of our newspaper and our political work.

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Drawing the class line in Yugoslavia

Unlike the majority of currents in the British left, FRFI always understood the national question as a vital but ultimately subordinate component of the class struggle, and on the basis has firmly opposed the plethora of bourgeois nationalist currents from the Baltics to Nagorno-Karabakh who seek to dismantle proletarian state power in the USSR in instalments, as it were. So it came as a bewildering development, to say the least, to find Dale Evans putting forward the same discredited Trotskyist idealist arguments in relation to Yugoslavia in the June/July FRFI.

Dale's argument seems to be as follows: Serbia is the dominant nation in the Yugoslav socialist state, and the oppressor of all the other national groups; therefore it is the bounden duty of communists to support the national movements of all the republics. But as Lenin said, the truth is always concrete. In Kosovo, for example, the numerically predominant Albanians have an excellent national claim. It is clear that many or most of them, now residing in the poorest of the Yugoslav republics, would like to be integrated into Albania - a country which a few weeks ago gave a landslide electoral victory to its socialist government.

(though the latter seems now to be capitulating to the US puppet 'democrats' it routed at the polls). Clearly a referendum in Kosovo to decide its future is the only solution compatible with national self-determination in this case.

The case is entirely otherwise in Croatia, which obtains the bulk of Dale's attention; this is one of the most prosperous of the Yugoslav republics, whose leaders nonetheless demand an even bigger slice of the cake. Whereas Kosovo's separation looks to socialist Albania for inspiration, the Croat separatists look to the misnamed 'Independent Croat State' of 1941-45, that is, the fascist dictatorship of Ante Pavelic's Ustasa movement, the most barbaric of all the Nazi puppet regimes!

This isn't intended as a whitewash of the Serbo-chauvinist leanings of the Milosevic government in Belgrade, which uses demagogic to divert attention from its increasing reliance on market forces; but the most direct threat to proletarian state power in Yugoslavia is posed by Croat and Slovene separation, which is openly pro-capitalist and against which whatever genuine communist elements Yugoslavia has should be in alliance with the Serb leadership until they can replace it.

In solidarity
MIKE WEBER
Aylesbury

Labour gags opponents

The newly-formed Lothian Campaign Against Redundancies and Cuts was denied a speaker at this year's Scottish miners' gala in Edinburgh.

Gala stewards called the police to eject supporters of the campaign from the marquee where trade union and Labour Party leaders were addressing the rally.

Supporters of the anti-cuts campaign had positioned their banner to the side of the marquee, but in a prominent position to catch the eye of the first speaker, Lothian regional council convenor, Eric Miligan.

The Labour-controlled council recently announced £38.5 million cuts to avoid 'capping' by the Tory government, in the teeth of opposition from pensioners, teachers, pupils, hospital and other local government workers.

But the organisers of the miners' gala claimed that the platform was 'too full' for a spokesperson from the anti-cuts campaign.

As soon as the banner was raised in the meeting, stewards closed in on the group, saying their campaign had no place at the gala (whose main slogan was for the reopening of Monktonhall Colliery). They were backed by Joe Owens, former miner and member of Militant who is

Extradition: a British process of criminalisation

The recent extradition of Dublin man Desmond Ellis from Ireland to Britain was the first of its kind. But since 1982, similar extraditions have become commonplace in British-occupied northern Ireland, and as things stand they will continue unabated. BRENDAN TRACEY, of H Blocks, Long Kesh, explains.

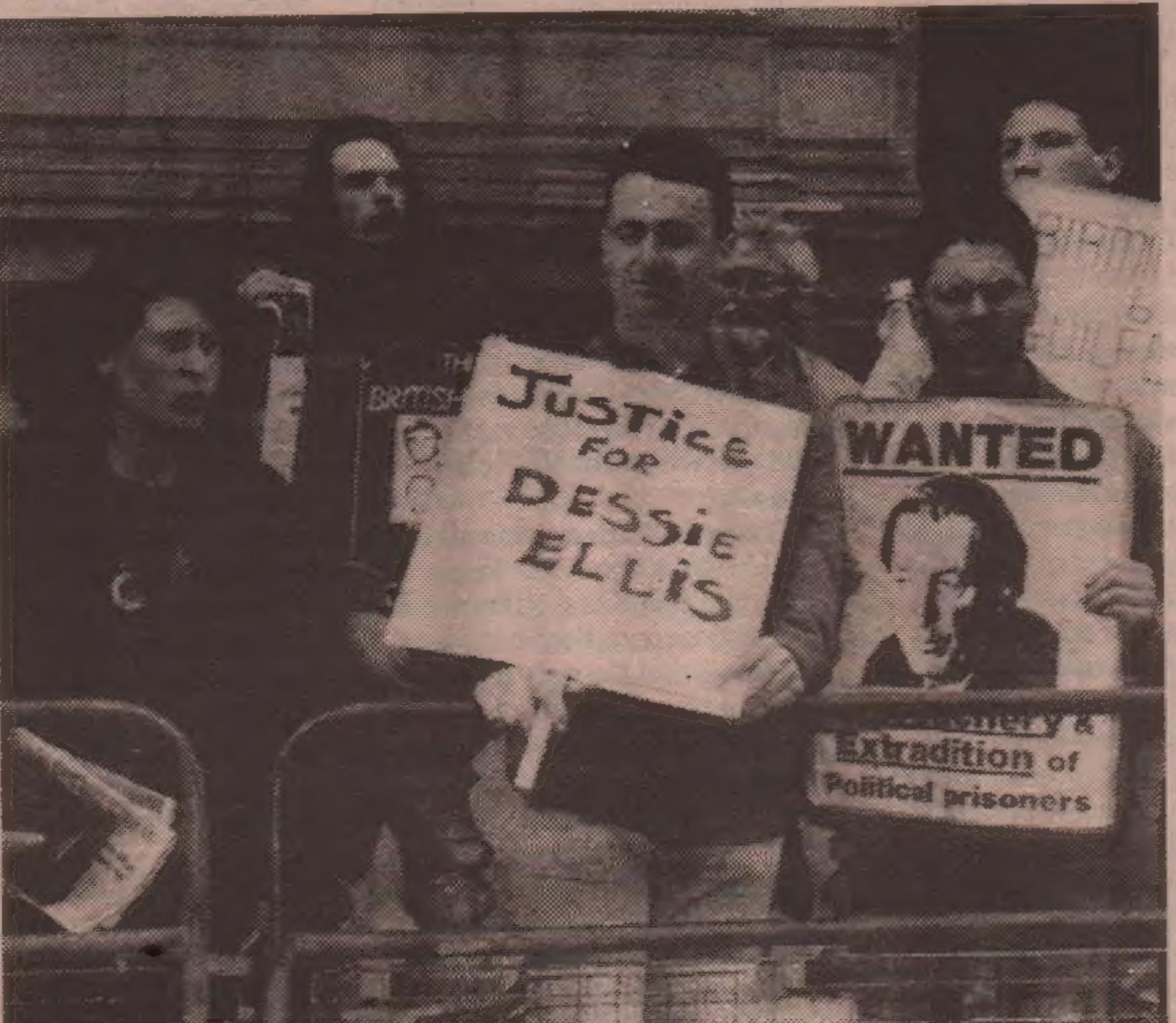
For many people, especially outside Ireland, the issues involved in the Anglo-Irish extradition process are never fully understood. Nor are the wider implications for international human rights and the rights of people to struggle for political change or protection from despotism via asylum fully assessed. It is in the interests of governments in power to cloud such issues. A trend to this effect is developing in the hidden agendas of the Trevi group of European Justice and Interior Ministers and the Shengen group of countries on border controls which is presently considering extradition of political fugitives and asylum for political refugees in relation to the advent of European unity in 1992. If events in Ireland are anything to go by, human rights are going to be seriously undermined, if not removed.

BRITAIN'S FIRST COLONY

Ireland was Britain's first colony and remained so until the IRA in 1921 forced Britain to negotiate a withdrawal. But instead of leaving the Irish to determine their own future as a nation, Britain decided to partition the six counties of Ireland and called the new statelet 'Northern Ireland'. Its existence has been maintained ever since with the aid of an artificially-created majority usually termed Unionists/Loyalists. The British

government has been hard pressed to hide this relationship from international scrutiny. Hence, the changing presentation of Britain's role in Ireland for international consumption:

1921: *Protecting the interests of*



RCG members joined friends and family of Dessie Ellis outside the Irish Embassy

Protestants/Loyalists

1969: *Protecting Catholics*
1971 (onwards): *Defeating the IRA*
1973 (onwards): *Defeating criminals, emergence of three main policies - 'criminalisation', 'ulsterisation' and 'normalisation'*

Late 1970s (onwards): *Defeating international terrorism, preventing the emergence of a 'new Cuba' in Europe, keeping the peace in Ireland, preventing a blood bath which would occur if the British forces left*

Present position: *being neutral in the Irish conflict, with no vested interest*

THE EC AND THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was a major success for the British. By allowing the Irish government for the first time a proposed say in northern Irish affairs, the British elicited a promise to sign and ratify the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ECOTSON) which became the 1987 Extradition Act (amended). It was under this new treaty that Desmond Ellis' extradition was effected. An important motivating force behind Britain's political manoeuvring is EC unity in 1992. How could they explain foreign occupation of a fellow EC member's territory (the Irish constitution claims the whole of Ireland as its national territory) and the maintenance of an alien 'border' through partition?

A similar, in fact identical, situation to northern Ireland exists on the soil of another EC member, Spain. With the same 'solutions' being tried. Basque separatists have since 1839 sought their independence from Spain and their own homeland - Euskadi. For years activists have taken refuge from oppression and death in France. Since Spain's inclusion as an EC member pressure has been applied on France to accede to Spanish requests for extradition which France succumbed to. Later, because of mounting pressure, France thought better and has now ceased this practice, only to replace it with deportations of those seeking refuge to countries as far afield as South America, Algeria and elsewhere. Proof again, if proof is needed, of what is in store for anyone rock-

ing the EC unity boat.

BRITAIN'S ASSAULT ON THE POLITICAL EXCEPTION

The past and present extradition 'problems' have pivoted around the issue of the 'political exception', an internationally recognised principle within the Irish 1965 Extradition Act. This clause specifically prohibits extradition to a requesting state, if the fugitive is engaged in political activity aimed at overthrowing an established government even by violent means. The court under the 'political exception' operates free from governmental political considerations or matters of foreign policy. Britain, the 'mother of democracy', 'defender of human rights', is the leading force in seeking its removal from treaties, especially when it comes to requests for extradition of Irish republican activists seeking refuge from British oppression.

CRIMINALISING THE IRISH STRUGGLE

Central to Britain's political and diplomatic drive against the 'political exception' is the importance it places on the 'criminalisation' of the Irish struggle. On this and their parallel strategy of 'ulsterisation' and 'normalisation' rests Britain's image worldwide. Courts as far-flung as the USA, France, Belgium and Holland have consistently returned verdicts which have contradicted the British 'criminalisation' policy in the north of Ireland. The Supreme Court in Ireland under the 1965 Extradition Act up until 1982 and British pressure, delivered resounding judgments which left no one, including the British government, in any doubt that the struggle was a political uprising in 'its most classic form' - the words used also in American courts.

Regrettably the USA and Ireland have conceded to pressure and suffered external interference in their courts. Ultimately, both have enacted extradition treaties modelled on ECOTSON which specifically excludes certain acts or the possession of certain arms as not meriting political protection. These treaties have negated the political exception, and those governments have knowingly restricted the courts' role in protecting fugitives' rights.

An added concern was highlighted in the Desmond Ellis extradition hearing. Ellis contended that he was totally willing to face the charges levelled against him under the 'Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1976' which allows prosecution in one jurisdiction for offences carried out in another. Ellis said he would rather face an Irish court than a British one which is hardly surprising given Britain's record on Irish political cases. The request was refused. Since 1976 only 13 prosecutions have taken place in the Republic under the Act, nearly all clear-cut cases of escaping from British prisons. Since 1982 there have been no prosecutions. Evidence must be furnished by the northern authorities, and southern legal sources have repeatedly claimed that the RUC have failed to provide evidence for cases to be laid.

The preference for extradition signifies either that it is seen as a political prize by the British government to please northern Ireland Unionists or that the authorities in Belfast and England are not certain that courts in the Republic would convict suspects as readily as the northern non-jury Diplock courts or British anti-Irish ones would on the type of evidence offered to them. Victor's justice. Someone once said that the European trend to virtually eliminate the 'political exception' that 'international law is not a mutual insurance system for the preservation of established governments'. It is up to all of us to ensure that this remains so. ■

Brooke's circus packs its bags

As was inevitable from the outset, the Peter Brooke talking circus packed its bags and pulled out of Belfast last week, having apparently been humbled in its attempts at producing a fig-leaf solution acceptable to all sides. He called a halt to the process before the whole house of cards came tumbling down. By ending the charade, he allows himself a slim chance of reviving the talks in Autumn. Reality dictates otherwise. The Brooke Initiative has taken its place in history.

SEÁN Ó MAOLDHOMNAIGH

Although Brooke's initiative was an abysmal failure, the media and all sides of the Houses of Parliament heaped praise on him. With the collapse of the talks, the facade that covers Britain's real role in Ireland is once again prone to exposure. While on the one hand the peace process is held up as the only solution, the other is busily engaged in crushing any voices who question Britain's right to be there in the first place.

Definitive proof of this comes from the Amnesty International report on human rights abuses in the United Kingdom released last month. It is a detailed examination of the brutal reality of British policy in Ireland, covering various methods of repression from shoot-to-kill, torture during detention, collusion by security forces with death squads to arbitrary arrests, amongst other abuses. It stands as concrete evidence of the violent truth hidden behind the Brooke talks, that the Six County statelet is a sectarian entity depen-

dent on violence as a foundation of its existence and maintenance.

In the introduction, the report indicates that 'the issues of concern are of such gravity as to seriously undermine confidence in human rights safeguards in the UK'. The nationalist community in the north of Ireland is under no illusions about 'confidence' in any 'safeguards'; as the report outlines they have been the ones to bear the brunt of the systematic violence and abuses.

In dealing with cases of ill-treatment while in police custody, the report has an extensive list of appalling examples, but 'although there have been many cases with *prima facie* evidence of ill-treatment, few have resulted in action against interrogating officers'. To put this in context, 'of the 319 complaints in 1989, 238 were classified as incapable of being completed'.

While investigating killings by the same security forces, some even more sinister facts emerge, not only about shoot-to-kill operations but also that 'Amnesty considers that the procedures used to investigate disputed

killings in Northern Ireland are ineffective in establishing all the facts and making them public'. Thus making it virtually impossible to bring those responsible to answer for their actions. Out of the 339 people killed by the security forces, 'most were from the Catholic population and many were unarmed; many were killed in disputed circumstances'. Compare this huge figure with the fact that only 21 prosecutions of those killers have taken place, of which 19 were found not guilty, one was convicted of manslaughter and given a suspended sentence. Just one - a soldier - was convicted of murder. He served two years and three months and rejoined the army. The facts speak for themselves.

Another frightening aspect of life faced by the nationalist community is the blatant collusion between British security forces and loyalist death squads. The official security forces work hand in glove with the unofficial paramilitaries.

The Stevens Inquiry, a limited investigation into these links, barely scratched the surface of the issue. The Inquiry itself noted that 'in the present climate' such collusion 'may never be completely eliminated.'

While Britain's peace initiative has proved a failure, the Amnesty report stands as an indictment of Britain's role in Ireland. Recent events show that abuses of this nature are on the increase at an alarming rate. In conjunction with the Brooke talks the

British state has been engaging in the very activities exposed in the report.

A shoot-to-kill operation in Coagh, Co. Tyrone on 3 June left three volunteers riddled with over 200 bullets. In Strabane at the end of May the RUC/British Army carried out a blanket raiding operation on over 1,500 homes in a five-day period. The systematic torture and ill-treatment of detainees during interrogation goes on unabated. Four young men held in Castlereagh Interrogation Centre for up to a week in the middle of June were subjected to treatment identical to that described in the Amnesty report and as bad as any period in the current conflict.

The 'unofficial forces' were carrying out similar atrocities. On 29 March two teenage girls and a young man were coldbloodedly murdered on a housing estate in north Armagh, and Eddie Fullerton, a prominent Sinn Féin councillor from Donegal was shot dead in his own home by the UDA/UFF at the end of May. The list goes on and on.

The message is clear. Britain wants to maintain its interests in Ireland at all costs. The nationalist community who disagree with British rule will be terrorised or killed. A quote from the Amnesty report sums up the British state's attitude to the Irish. An individual interviewed recalled being told, after having protested about harassment to an RUC officer, that 'As far as I'm concerned, everyone in West Belfast is a Provo'. ■